



# HOUSING COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

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Tuesday, March 3, 2020

6:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

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**The Housing Committee will meet for a hearing to receive an update from the Cambridge Housing Authority, Community Development, Affordable Trust Fund, Just a Start and Homeowners Rehab, Inc. on the state of Affordable Housing in Cambridge and challenges and opportunities facing the City over the next two years**



**HOUSING COMMITTEE - MARCH 3, 2020**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**E. Denise Simmons:** Good evening. The time of the Meeting having arrived, we will call this Meeting to order. I'm Denise Simmons, Co-chair of the Housing Committee, and I'm joined with my- joined by my Co-chair, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler. We also have with us um, this afternoon Councillor Zondervan, Councillor Carlone, Vice Mayor Mallon, and Councillor Nolan as well. I want to say welcome to everyone and to the first Meeting of the Housing Committee of 2021. I know it's a beautiful day or was a beautiful day and we are anxious to learn the results of Super Tuesday. I heard the early voting had over 5000 voters in early voting and some of our precincts by midday had up to 1000 voters. I think that bodes well for citizen participation. So I truly do appreciate people making time to be here to talk about a hyper-local issue of the day and kind of putting the nat- national picture in the backdrop just for now. Uh, the call to this Meeting is as follows. The Housing Committee will meet for a hearing to receive an update from the Cambridge Housing Authority, the Community Development Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Just-A-Start, Homeowners Rehab, on the state of affordable housing in Cambridge and the challenges and opportunities that we're facing or will face in the City over the next two years. This is what I would call setting the table. Since it is still such a new City Council term and we have a new Mayor and two new members of the Council, I thought it was time that we would take stock of our current housing situation. I did have an opportunity to meet with my Co-chair and it was kind of looking at um, what we thought were some of the issues we thought were important to invite others to the table that really do this work on an ongoing basis just to inform the Council but also for the Council to have a chance to give us their point of view, their thoughts on what- what we should be looking at um, over the next term, you know, looking at our current priorities, the current things that we're doing. But again, and most importantly, giving our community-based organizations an opportunity to tell us from their view uh, what's going on in Cambridge. What is the housing- what is the housing situation? Where do things currently stand in terms of major providers of the affordable housing. And how can we get a clearer or bigger picture in terms of the housing crisis and what do we still continue to face? So I think this evening's conversation should give us a better sense of all of that. I'm going to go around the table to ask people to introduce themselves and then I'm going to ask each of the representatives of some of the community-based organizations to give us a six to eight minute uh, overview of some information on what projects that their organizations are working on. What challenges that they are facing or they see that uh, see that we will be facing over the next year or two. And I do want to note that Peter Daily from HRI who I did talk to earlier said he's going to be a little late but so we'll skip over him or maybe just the normal progression by the time he walks in the door it'll be his turn. Uh, but we'll fit him in when he arrives. After receiving these updates we're going to formally introduce or reintroduce Amor Penzac to briefly introduce herself to the room and talk about her new housing role with- with- with the City. I also want to remind people that there's a sign-up sheet. There will be Public Comment. So please sign in and say that you check that yes that you want to speak on the record. Please be advised that this Meeting is going to be recorded by public and private devices. City of Cambridge always

tapes the Meetings. Private means any individual can have a recorded device in this chamber as long as it is not disruptive. Uh, so having said that, I want to a-again acknowledge my Co-Chair, uh, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler and invite him to make some opening remarks after which we will go around the room and introduce who is sitting at the table.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. Yeah uh, my name is Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler. I'm uh, the Co-Chair of the Housing Committee along with Councillor Simmons uh, and new City Councillor this term. Um, I would just open by saying housing I think is a perhaps the number one issue for uh, the City Council and a lot of the folks in the City who are facing an affordable housing crisis. Uh, it's brought up uh, including last night with the bond rating that Cambridge has a lot of resources and I think with a lot of resources comes a lot of responsibility. Um, I hope the Committee and the Council can also be aware of uh, who is not in the room when it comes- I think that's a really important thing when it comes to a lot of these conversations when it comes to folks who don't speak English as the first language, immigrants people with families who aren't able to make it out uh, and in particular two thirds of the uh, City that are renters and that are uh, experiencing extremely high cost of living. Um, I think we talk a lot about sort of um, the rate of housing stability and really trying to recognize that renters should have the same right to housing stability that homeowners do. Um, I mentioned last night the below average uh, tax rates the City have which is great. I wish we could also say we had a below average displacement rate instead uh, of one of the highest rates of displacement of folks uh, probably anywhere in the country. Um, Cambridge is a City known for innovation. I think we can also apply that to housing and I hope we can find solutions here and lead the uh, country on the affordable housing crisis. Um, so with that um, I'll- we'll turn it over uh, for other introductions.

**Quinton Zondervan:** Quinton Zondervan, Cambridge City Councillor.

**Peter Daly:** Peter Daly from Homeowners Rehab, also on the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust.

**Carl Nagy-Kirchland:** Carl Nagy- Carl Nagy-Kirchland from Just-A-Start.

**Ellen Semonoff:** Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Services.

**Lisa Peterson:** Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager.

**Iram Farooq:** Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

**Chris Cotter:** Chris Cotter, Director of Housing Community Development.

**Maura Pensak:** Maura Pensack, Housing Liaison to the City Manager.

**Mike Johnson:** Mike Johnston, Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority.

**Marc McGovern:** Marc McGovern, City Council.

**Alanna M. Mallon:** Alanna Mallon, City Council.

**Dennis J. Carlone:** Dennis Carlone, City Council.

**Neil Albert:** Neil Albert, Office of Councillor Simmons.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you everyone. So just a brief reminder, we- we are using new software to collect a- as a part of collecting or taking the minutes transcribing. That's the word. Thank you so much uh, for transcribing the minutes because we're doing that. I'm going to ask people to keep their voices up to articulate. Don't be as quite as loud as the people outside, but loud enough that the people in the back in here, but also that the uh, software can pick up your voice and- and manage to know what your're saying. So it's not only just being keeping your voices up, but, you know, we have a tendency sometimes to talk very fast and by doing that it makes it very hard to- to then transcribe for the minutes later. So I will- may have to remind you from time to time, but just want to make sure we are doing our best. Okay. So having said that, the floor is now open for a discussion. Um, why don't we go from this way around more. Maura, we're going to leave you to last. So, Mike?

**Mike Johnson:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to- to speak um, tonight. So um, a little bit um, about the Cambridge Housing Authority where we're at at this point. Um, so the Housing Authority owns and manages um, almost 3,000 units, hard units in the City of Cambridge. And we have um, we have about 5,000 vouchers. So in total um, we're at about 8,000 um, households that we subsidize in one way or another um, about 14,000 individuals. Um, the uh, the, the 3,000 units about 2,700 of those are um, what are we term um, formally um, public housing units. Um, as folks in the audience and and the Council are aware um, you know public housing has um, diminished in grace with uh, Congress. Um, appropriations have diminished over the years. um, Capital work um, is you know Capital Funding for Capital work has been pretty much non-existent um, with this current administration actually um, for the third year in a row looking to zero out the Capital Fund. The Capital Fund is what is used by housing authorities to actually do work in their public housing units. If you need a new roof, if you need um, new windows, if you need um, a new kitchen, that comes out of your Capital Funding. Um, historically the Housing Authority would get about three to four million dollars um, a year to do capital work. Um, yet we had millions and millions and millions of dollars worth of um, unfunded or deferred Capital work um, that would have taken us um, you know 25, 30 years to to to get to um, at the rate that we were being funded. Um, the Housing Authority several years ago um, back in 2009 um, started a campaign with our residents, started talking about um, the fact that we needed to figure out um, a better way to do housing, affordable housing. Um, and since 2009 we have been moving our portfolio out of um, public housing and into the Section 8 project-based um, portfolio. So we've actually through um, different mechanisms that are available through HUD, um, one of them's called the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program which is RAD. Um, and the other is Section 18 which is um, Demo Dispo. Um, we've used those two tools to basically as of the la- end of last year

we've moved 92 percent of our portfolio out of public housing um, and into this new world. Um, the new world means um, we have investors. We've actually um, gone out, we've had investors come in um, and provide us money to basically do the work in these units. In the past 10 years we've done half a billion dollars worth of work in a little over half the portfolio. Um, for our residents that means um, you know new kitchens, new baths, um, new plumbing in the walls, new um, windows, um, brick uh, repointing or um, in cases like Manning or Millers River which you see going on now, um, completely new faces on the building which are much more energy efficient. Um, the Housing Authority has been able to cut um, about a third of its expenditures for um, utilities for energy consumption. We've been able to um, move a lot on the buildings that we've renovated. We've actually moved the infrastructure from basement space up into um, new penthouse space for sustainability. But the key thing for us is we've maintained all of these affordable units in the City, um, which if they were lost, you would never ever be able to replace them. Um, the level of construction, some of you have been out to our sites, you've done tours. These are 30-year build-outs. These are buildings that will be here long after I'm gone um, and um, we'll be able to basically help our our folks um, going forward for at least another 30 years. But um, it's not done. Um, we're a little over half of the portfolio. Um, right now we have Miller's River running um, which is about \$110 million construction project. We've actually started to um, move people back into the top floors which are now done. Um, we have um, new projects starting this year at the total about \$113 million. Um, Roosevelt Towers, the Front building, Porter Road, um, Burns Apartments just closed. Um, we started construction there. St. Paul's Apartments is coming back online um, in June. Um, that's an SRO development in, in Harvard Square which you'll you'd never be able to replace units like that in Harvard Square, um, and then Garfield. Um, we are actually uh, currently um, putting eight families back into our Garfield apartments on Mass Ave. Um, but to give you kind of an idea of the demand because that's really what you guys are, are kind of looking for. Um, the Housing Authority right now has um, a little over 20,000 people on our waiting list. Um, and those are discrete applications, distinct applications. So um, and of those um, about roughly seven it's it's 6,896 are what we call Local Preference um, Applicants. And a Local Preference is somebody that lives or works in Cambridge or is a veteran. So a veteran from California or, or, or some other state could actually get a local preference with us. Um, just this past year, um, we took 3,207 applications, um, over the course of, um, 2019. Um, something else, and let me tell you something a little bit about who we serve. And, and, um, I, I got interested. I, I saw the, the City received their AAA bond rating again, which congratulations, that's fantastic. Um, and you should all be very proud of that. Um, and I was looking at the reports and some of the numbers and the one that jumped out at me was that the income in Cambridge is 167% of the US median. Um, so that puts the, the income here in Cambridge at about 106. Um, so that's the median income in in Cambridge. The median in the U.S. is about 63. The population, the median income for the population we serve um, throughout our portfolio is \$15,000. Um, this population that we serve would have no other place to go in the City of Cambridge. Um, let alone many other places at \$15,000.

Um, we also do um, what we call emergency intakes. Um, and um, in, in the last from August to December so the last roughly quarter of of 2019 Housing Authority did um, 31 intakes um, and about half of those folks end up qualifying to to receive some type of a placement whether they get into public housing or they get a voucher. Um, and many of those people in dire straits that would again they would have no other opportunity to go anywhere. Um, I've got many more details. I'll share a booklet with you at the end of the session but uh, that's it for now. Thank you.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you very much. Um, we're going to go now to Chris Carter and Iram. Try to keep your discussion between six and eight minutes. Um, so that we'll have time to ask questions. So what we're going to do after we hear from all of you, we will have questions from the Committee members, Councillors, and then we'll go to public. We'll have a general discussion on affordable housing and then go to Public Comment. So you have a floor.

**Iram Farooq:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to kick us off and then Chris will do the bulk of the uh, presentation for us. But I just wanted to, uh, to note how great it is to be here today following our discussion yesterday um, just to celebrate that even though we know that there is so much more work to be done in the housing arena that we have uh, just made a significant reached a significant milestone um, in work that we have been trying to do for many I would say more or less as long as I have worked for the for the, the City in preserving Fresh Pond Apartments and the step also indicates uh, how strongly the City is willing to put forward um, both the City Manager and and obviously with the, the invocation and blessing of the Council at uh, as many resources as are needed towards this problem from the City side. So with the \$15 million that were added, there's a commitment from the trust to to spend up to \$40 million to preserve over 500 units of um, expiring use housing units at Fresh Pond Apartments. I just want to make sure that we take note of that um, of that very significant threshold that that we passed yesterday. Um, there are um, there I, I will say that uh, we've always talked about resources being important and uh, I'm sure uh, you know Mike talked about it in terms of uh, losing federal resources or diminishing federal resources. Um, and the City has committed uh, the City Manager has has increased um, the amount of funding that comes from City sources so that in um, FY '20 um, you know it had we had appropriated over \$20 million and with last night's uh, appropriation, we are over \$35 million um, for the year um, towards affordable housing. And um, I just came from our Budget Hearing uh, and we've been discussing with with the, the Manager supplementing the funds with additional staffing capacity as well because as we add funds we have to think about uh, staff capability to to support those. So you- you'll be- this is- the discussions are still underway um, at the Manager's level. But uh, as the budget moves forward and comes to the Finance Committee and then to the Council, you will all be hearing more uh, along those lines. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Chris to speak to um, some of the specifics.

**Chris Cotter:** Thank you Iram, through you, Madam Chair and your colleagues. So as around noted, the big news really is Fresh Pond Apartments and the fact that

we have an agreement in place to move forward with uh, the plan that we've put together over the last several years with the owner. Uh, and we're looking forward now to get back to talking with residents uh, about uh, next steps there um, and really thanks to everyone around the table uh, for your uh, support uh, patience uh, in involvement with this. I think uh, we will continue to uh, keep you up to date as we go forward. Uh, but really the, the fact that the City was in the position to put \$40 million into preserving these units, really is an exceptional thing and we're we're pleased that we're able to uh, to work that out with the owner and look forward to uh, moving ahead with uh, uh, talking with residents and really looking at capping our uh, our expiring-use uh, preservation issues that we've been talking about really for the last ten years. We found uh, I think in 2009 uh, that there were almost 1100 affordable units that were facing expiring-affordability restrictions uh, by the end of this year uh, at 10 different properties. Uh, we have preserved nine of them to date. Uh, the last and the most significant uh, is Fresh Pond Apartments. So uh, where we are today is a really good spot and we've got a fair amount of work to do now going forward to get everything squared away by the end of the year. But we're in a really good position uh, with the funds that we uh, but you all committed last night and the commitment that the Affordable Housing Trust made yesterday. So what I thought I'd do is just give you a quick overview of some of our key uh, problematic areas and where we are- and what we're, we're looking at. Starting with um, really well preservation and development. You heard the update on preservation. But uh, looking at new development, we continue to have uh, new affordable units under development in 100% affordable uh, developments underway at three locations in the City uh, funded by the Affordable Housing Trust more than 160 units that are now under development. So you hear about uh, where uh, HRI is with Finch Cambridge as they're nearing completion. They're the most significant piece of that and I'm sure Carl will tell us about the status of uh, Squirrel Wood we've got another uh, 20 or so and the the one that um, I can uh, give you an update on is Frost Terrace uh, which is under construction in Porter Square. Uh, moving along well we're looking at completion I believe in early 2021. Uh, we are um, continuing with um, that uh, work and have are now working with uh, providers of affordable housing looking at a number of new sites uh, that we can uh, consider for affordable development. We'll be taking new requests To the Affordable Housing Trust in the coming months. So we hope to have more to announce. I know you'll hear about some of the projects today as we are talking with developers about uh, moving into the permitting phase of their development timeframe. Uh, so the other uh, big pieces that we have going on are is, uh, the uh, programs that we have which offer housing directly to residents and then also the inclusionary program where we're seeing uh, units being set aside in the private market. And I can say that we continue to see a uh, really significant number of units coming through the inclusionary pipeline. At this point we have uh, over 225 affordable units that are under construction uh, under the inclusionary provisions around the City. Uh, they are, you know some are just moving into construction. Some are underway and we'll begin to see those uh, being complete uh, in 2020. Um, so it continues to be a pretty significant pipeline and supply of units. And in addition to the 225 or so



that are under construction, there's another 65 that we have approved that will uh, are set but for the issuance of a building permit. So uh, we expect that number to increase by about 65 as soon as building permits are issued uh, for new buildings, the largest of which is the next phase of the Cambridge Crossing Development in East Cambridge. Uh, and then looking out further beyond that uh, we are now uh, underway with looking at uh, another hundred plus units uh, you know in the pre-approval process. So if you total that up, uh, that's over 400 units that are coming through the inclusionary pipeline right now, which will continue to uh, allow us to serve residents and get deeper into our pools than we have. And to that end we are now uh, dealing with the good news of roughly 90 or so uh, units that are coming online or turning over in the rental program. So we're uh, working to fill those units with managers and building owners and, at this point, are reaching deeper into our applicant pool than we ever have. Uh, so we have I think uh, 65 or so eligible applicants on hand today that we're uh, sending over to property owners and managers. And we have another 120 applications that we're screening uh, for eligibility. So we'll be adding to that number as we screen and find folks eligible. And then we'll be working with owners and managers as they do their own review uh, looking at um, looking at eligibility for that, that housing. So uh, good news there and as I said we're reaching folks that we have not um, uh, gotten to in many years where in some cases particularly for the larger units reaching back several years uh, to folks that have been waiting in, in the queue for a two or a three bedroom unit for uh, for a number of years in many cases. So it's good news there. Uh, likewise uh, we are uh, moving along with our home ownership program and continuing in the steady pace that we have seen over the last few years with uh, Homebridge and our home ownership. We've got I think five or six buyers that are out with assistance now uh, looking for homes. We're on track to see 15 or 20 buyers purchased this year uh, through Homebridge or other assistance. Uh, and uh, you are expecting that we'll be marketing new affordable homeownership units at a couple of locations in 2020. Uh, 10 or 11 units that we'll see coming later this year. So it's the quick update. I'm happy to answer any questions or get into more detail.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Uh, thank you. So did- okay. You're just here. It's great to have you. Carl.

**Carl Nagy-Kirchland:** Hi everybody. Again, I'm Carl Nagy-Kirchland, uh, the relatively new Executive Director, still at Just-A-Start. And when you succeed somebody or succeed someone who succeeded, someone who'd been there for 45 years, you'll be the new director for a while. So, uh, that's, uh, I think I offer a perspective though, uh, being new of a real, a sense of appreciation for, uh, both the colleagues, uh, here in the City who are very sophisticated, uh, very cooperative and have been really helpful to me as I've gotten started. Uh, and likewise the um, you know both the alignment that we have with the City and the sophistication at this uh, uh, CDD is a real um, pleasure and I think we shouldn't take that for granted. So I think as we're uh, starting this conversation about where we collectively should go, I think it's important to just uh, note that a lot of um, really important pieces are in place in terms of strong organizations with long

track records. I inherited one of those organizations, but also the Housing Authority and NHRI and a great um, team of people um, at CDD. So uh, people I think know quite a bit about Justice Start. Um, you know we pride ourselves on uh, being you know both uh, focused on housing but also beyond that um, assisting people uh, to get sustaining careers um, so that they can move forward economically. Both uh, our housing work and uh, our workforce development and youth programs are really designed to make sure that people can thrive here in Cambridge but um, to the points made earlier, housing is really the linchpin and the foundation for that. Without a stable place to live, none of the rest of it is possible. So um, I'll just say a little bit about what Justice Start um, you know is up to and has been up to. We have about 600 uh, apartments in our portfolio. Um, in 25 some odd developments around the City. Um, and in the few years before I started we were focused on um, renovating, refinancing, and modernizing uh, our portfolio which you know was 25, 30 years old in most cases. And where we had opportunities we um, we added units. So Chris mentioned our Squirrel Wood uh, project where in addition to renovating um, those properties we're also adding about uh, 30 units um, new units um, family sized uh, primarily. Um, and I'm excited to say that we've got about 215 apartments in our uh, well condos and apartments in our portfolio. So people are probably aware of our two-phase project at- to uh, 402 Rindge. Phase one being at the corner which will be about 24 apartments. Uh, but in addition uh, we'll provide a sort of state-of-the-art home for our workforce development and our youth build programs. Uh, which will very sort of deliberately integrate those programs into the into that sort of campus if you will at 402. Um, and provide those uh, workforce development and youth build services to that whole region including the public housing and the other Rindge Towers. Um, In, in addition phase two there would be a 75 apartment-building with 75 apartments in a seven-story building. So on that site over the course of the next few years we'll be breaking ground on and then completing about 100 apartments. Um, and then in very close cooperation with the City we seized a very unique opportunity on New Street where we acted at breakneck speed to get 52 New Street under agreement and then closed within about six weeks on that nine million dollar purchase of an acre of land on which we're anticipating that we can build about 90 maybe more apartments. And I, I point to that because uh, again there aren't many places, well there aren't many places you have to pay nine million dollars for an acre of land but uh, there aren't many places where you could do so so quickly um, with the City um, you know stepping up so uh, quickly and supportively to seize what was uh, you know a rare opportunity to get an acre of land um, in, in uh, in that neighborhood. And then finally our um, the last project rounding out those 215 homes that I mentioned is uh, um, still sort of in flux exactly what the uh, scale of the project will be. But at the corner of Broadway and Windsor uh, we're proposing to build uh, homeownership uh, you know property with 12, 15 um, homeownership units. So we're very excited to be doing some uh, affordable homeownership. In addition to that um, Just-A-Start uh, also um, as, as, as HRI um, assists uh, low-income homeowners through the HIP program um, which is uh, supports you know house rich, cash poor, or income poor households to renovate their homes. And then we

also focus, you know, because no matter how many units we develop, how many apartments we develop, um, it's, it's really only going to serve a fraction of the need. So we also provide uh, a number of housing services, court mediation to prevent evictions, rapid rehousing for families that have been evicted or are homeless and um, we call that sort of the people side of housing. The last thing I want to say which I think is why it's important that um, we have such long-standing mission-driven organizations doing this work is that we uh, take resident services very seriously. So once we build the you know building the building is sort of half half the job uh, and then managing it and providing services and supporting those residents to maintain their ten- tenancies, but also to plug them into programs that allow them to increase their income or um, you know, get the social services they need so that they can thrive. So we build those into our properties. We have, uh, you know, professional resident services um, staff that support families in all those ways.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you. Peter.

**Peter Daly:** Peter Daly again from Homeowners Rehab. Uh, and uh, we do a lot of the same similar programs that that Carl does. Uh, I think uh, the one thing I just want to build off on what he said about resident service is we're finding it's more important than ever. Uh, and that's primarily because of the federal government walking away from so many programs. So basic things like food programs. We're finding people don't have enough food to eat. Uh, so we're really having to try to step into that void. And fortunately I think in places like Cambridge there are resources around so we just need to connect the dots to make sure that people are getting the food that they need. Education is another one. We're finding many of our residents can't afford this cost of secondary education or and so we started a scholarship program and we've given out over \$1.2 million dollars uh, over the last number of years to help folks get into uh, their next phase of their education. And uh, we're seeing really good payback on that uh, as people are starting to you know really succeed uh, from having uh, that resource. The biggest thing that we do though is uh, development of, of affordable rental housing. Uh, we have a portfolio of over 1,300 apartments in the City. Uh, the smallest being two units uh, and uh, largest being 300. Um, right now we are just about the finishing stages of the Finch Concord Highlands project up in Fresh Pond. Uh, 98 uh, apartments, mixed income, all affordable. Uh, we are 85 percent complete. So we are hoping to have an event there in May uh, to be able to thank everyone who put out so much effort to make that uh, project happen. Uh, we're in the process of processing Applications uh, just to allude to Mike's comment about over subscription for the 98 units we had almost 2700 Applications. Uh, and although I welcome the 98 new uh, families to our family uh, it's really hard to say no and I think you folks all know what it's like to meet people that come into your office and ask for help and we tell them to get uh, apply and and they don't make it and in this case it's a significant number uh, did not make it over 2,500 uh, we're not able to make it and we'll go on the waiting list there uh, and uh, I'm really encouraged to hear about all the other housing that's going on because we really need to start making a dent in the list of people who are waiting for us to

help them. Um, this also is an important project for us because of the Passive House {Inaudible}. If any of you met Jane Carboni, you know she is extremely passionate about this issue. Uh, and uh, this I think when everybody said you can't do Passive House on a building this large, uh, she just said watch me uh, and she has done it as the biggest Passive House project in the state. Uh, and uh, we are really anxious to see how this turns out and we'll be following uh, a lot of the metrics that we get uh, as we put this building into operation.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Excuse me Peter are you saying passive?

**Peter Daly:** Passive. P-A-S-S-I-V-E. Uh, yep. Um, the other large project we're doing right now is 808 Memorial Drive. Uh, this is a project that we have owned for a while. However, it was losing its subsidy. Uh, the 236 subsidy that had been in there for 40 years was expiring uh, and we needed to provide a safety net for all the folks who were living there and had were losing that subsidy. So again, working with our wonderful partners. The Cambridge Housing Authority. Did I say that loud enough, Mike? A little a little louder. Uh, we were able to essentially uh, have a mechanism of prepaying the mortgage before it did expire, which triggered uh, vouchers for uh, all the remaining tenants who did not have section eights. Uh, so they are now all in place. Uh, I think the project based contract was just signed. Uh, and uh, we are now uh, starting to plan uh, much needed renovations. We'll probably spend about \$70 million of renovations on this property over the next couple of years. So we hope to close on that in May. So thank you.

**E. Denise Simmons:** I thank you. Thank you. Thank all of you for your, your testimony and gives us an idea of what is going on in the City and what you're doing. So before we go to the Council, I wanted to uh, again introduce our newest housing advocate in the, in the fight for affordable housing in Cambridge, Ms. Maura Penzac. So Maura, you have the floor.

**Maura Pensak:** Thank you Madam Chair and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. And I want to just share a little bit about um, what I've been doing the past six months, um, what I hope to do um, uh, in the next in the coming six months and year. Um, but first I just wanted to you know just say what a pleasure it is to work with everybody around this table. Um, and especially you know just kind of I'd call out that together between um, Department of Human Services in particular MSC, um, CDD, CHA, HRI, JAS and even CEOC, we have um, it may be a decentralized Office of Housing Stability, but it is really coordinated and robust. Um, and I think we're going to just continue in that direction, maybe with a little bit of added capacity. But I think the City has just a lot of services and programs and I think we can make it stronger and um, just keep moving forward. So just wanted to talk about our model, if you will, of the Office. Um, with that said, just a little bit about what I've been doing. Of course, you know, initially um, I did a lot around just kind of getting to know folks, reaching out to people, hearing what they have to say, and then comparing that to existing reports such as Envision, the um, previous uh, comprehensive plan that came out of this Committee uh, and the most recent Tenant Displacement

Task Force. Uh, of course no surprise to anyone the three areas that were you know identified were access, people are confused, they don't know how to get into the different you know opportunities, prevention. All kinds of issues from tenant concerns to owner concerns to you know funding um, and systemic change. So with that said um, I developed a work plan that I think coordinates or or attempts to address a number of those areas through a few different avenues through coordination: some project development, um, some direct service, uh, and then also a little bit of policy review and promotion of best practices. Um, so some examples of the coordination. One thing that together uh, Just-A-Start, HRI, CDD and we're working on um, is really taking a look at the um, waitlist that everybody's talked about and trying to get a sense of you know, what is the um, unique number here in Cambridge of folks who are in need of housing? So if we have 7,000 people on every waitlist, um, which ones can we combine and do we have you know, 7,000 households in need or do we have 2,000 and they're on all the different waitlists. So that's just a small example of coordination. Um, another that came out of um, CDD and Just-A-Start that we're working on is pulling together folks now from HRI, COC, Council on Aging, um, and in the Inspections Department to look at the impact of distressed buildings in the City um, and not just um, from the- or in addition to the um, impact of the, the housing itself. But what happens to the residents? What happens to the owners? Are there the owners who may not be taking advantage of services and some of those um, buildings that have potential for rental units but are not up and running. Uh, so looking at how to coordinate uh, the various efforts that we have to address those situations. And then another one working um, with COC and others on bringing back uh, response to the hoarding issues. Um, because hoarding um, because the City, you know, every City, everyone in that's an issue. Um, and there used to be a task force here in Cambridge. Um, and throughout the region, I think it's, uh, the number of resources have kind of gotten lost and so we're trying to bring that back up. So those are just some examples of coordination. Um, direct service and advocacy. Um, I've you know worked with a number of individuals um, really trying to not duplicate what the Multi-Service Center does but take on those other kind of special cases. Um, and those uh, range from you know appeals for folks who did not um, get accepted to a unit because of credit. Um, to, you know, Tenant issues or um, and homeless families that aren't being served or are being underserved. Um, so different kinds of advocacy there. Um, and some of those uh, have led to kind of bigger projects. Normandy that I think everyone knows around the table but I'm happy to give numbers on that um, an update if, if you want it. Um, also um, Briston Arms where some um, uh, concerns were raised collectively. Um, and we've had some movement. Um, POA has come to the table and they have changed some of their policies um, and practices and have committed to, to doing more as they move forward. Um, and then some project development working on training curriculum and materials um, and alternative credit um, tools and strategy with the COC and others. And then finally a little bit on the Policy uh, working closely with the CDD and others for um, things like the Transfer Fee and would love to work more on um, or see if we can steal from our sister City in Somerville and uh, advance the Housing Stabilization Act of some

sort. Um, so it's kind of again just highlights uh, and trying to round out the the different strategies that uh, I'm working on collectively.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank, thank you very much. That was- that was great. All right. So the floor is now open to my colleagues to ask questions and I would say ask a question maybe two and then uh, let someone else so that we can get- everyone gets an opportunity to at least go around to have one shot at one or two shots asking a question. So having said that uh, to my colleague, do you want to start off? Do you have any questions?

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** I'd be happy to start out with a couple questions. Thank you. Um, one is for uh, the CDD uh, and just wondering if we could uh, I think a question I get probably other Councillors do as well are just on a couple of the uh, uh, lots the the City has and what the status is them on uh, Vail Court uh, the Cherry Street lot would just be great for everyone to sort of get an update at the same time. Uh, and then the other is probably for all of the partners and thinking about a situation um, like Normandy Avenue, a building that was uh, with rents significantly below market rate, um, had been in a family for a few generations, wasn't really on the City's radar until after it was sold. And then we were sort of acting uh, reacting to it and just wondering how we can get ahead uh, of cases. We'd love to hear from the Affordable Housing Partners and sort of reaching out to, to properties that where there might be an opportunity to, to make a purchase beforehand or to, you know do deed restriction to keep affordable. Uh, brainstorming about sort of ways to be more, more proactive I think would be really interesting to go around the table.

**E. Denise Simmons:** So you want to give a shot to that?

**Iram Farooq:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll start off with uh, the question about Vail Court and, and Cherry Street. So as you know, Vail Court, the City took it by eminent domain and it has subsequently been caught up in, in a lawsuit from the previous owner. Uh, that lawsuit remains unresolved and um, to the extent that we can surmise, um, there is not a solution in sight in the immediate future, so it could in fact remain in this um, state of purgatory for some time uh, until there is a decision from the courts. Um, as far as Cherry Street is concerned, that is- uh, MIT still owns the property, though it is committed to be transferred over to, to the City as part of a zoning transaction and an agreement that the City Council negotiated. Um, that is, we had initiated the process some time back which uh, ended up at an impasse because there was a desire to have multiple different uh, uses on the site. I think uh, thinking has changed in the intervening time and um, this is one of the um, restarting the community process and community discussion around Cherry Street is um, is on our agenda for the coming fiscal year. So we will reinitiate that community process and um, our thought is to go forward with the perspective which we have uh, subsequently been hearing from the Council that there is really a desire to principally think of it as a housing site uh, rather than have a more open-ended discussion which could again find us in an impasse. So that's our goal for taking forward next fiscal year and then move into uh,

assuming that we reach agreement with the community to then go forward with um, the RFP working with the Affordable Housing Trust.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you. Councillor, are you yielding the floor?

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** I did have one other follow-up question that just reminded me of the MIT bit of uh, the building in Central Square that was a triple-decker that the City had gotten and I was just wondering if there had been movement on that front.

**Iram Farooq:** Um, uh, thank you through um, through you Madam uh, Chair. Again that particular process we have um, it is on our uh, list to address. We have been uh, staff have been very much engaged with the projects that some of our um, housing partners have described um, we are um, it, it is kind of uh, on in that queue and we are hopeful that it's something that we can uh, initiate also in um, either towards the end of this calendar year or early in, in the following year um, and increasing our staff capacity which I spoke about earlier uh, is something that can help in that regard and that is certainly something we're working with the City Manager on building.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Mr. Cotter?

**Chris Cotter:** Uh, yeah through you Madam Chair. So to answer the question about Normandy Ave and I think um, we've given that some thought and have been trying to process what we think happened there and have come back uh, to thinking about ways we can uh, try to be better aware of buildings that are potentially being sold uh, uh, so that we're able to take a shot. I don't know that the Normandy Ave would have- would have worked out given that the price that they paid. But what we have done in the past is uh, uh, send on behalf of the City letters to all owners of rental buildings you know within a certain size parameter to suggest that if people are interested in uh, funding to do improvements in exchange for keeping units affordable or if they're interested in selling um, that we'd be interested in talking to them. We do hear uh, in addition to buildings that are listed on the market, we certainly hear informally about properties that might be uh, coming up for sale and work with all the groups around the table to try to take a look at them to see where there are opportunities. So one of the things that we have discussed in response to the Normandy situation is uh, sending a letter like that again trying to cast the net to see what we can get. I can say we have done this in the past. I can think of one case where we did get an owner who was willing uh, to come in and talk and we ended up uh, uh, HRI bought a building I think in 2009 or 2010. Um, over the years I think our letter got kind of uh, you know tossed into the stack of all the letters that that multi-family owners get. But uh, it certainly doesn't mean that we don't want to continue trying to ,to look for those opportunities to see if there's one that we can we can make work and keep uh, something that's uh, an affordable asset in, in that community.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you. Thank you. Councillor- Councillor Zondervan.

**Quinton Zondervan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Um, just to follow up on the City owned lots, we own other property as well on Bishop Allen and other locations. So what's really preventing us from building affordable housing on those properties?

**E. Denise Simmons:** Ms. Peterson.

**Lisa Peterson:** Yeah. Um, through you Madam Chair. I think certainly the Council brought this up to the City Manager a week or two ago and we will be reporting back to the Council about um, the list of lots. I mean certainly the parking lots in Central Square are not vacant. They're being used for parking. So you know we need to really think about it in a larger development if we're going to um, I mean they're not vacant lots right? They're being used as parking but we absolutely need to - if there's a plan that's being requested about how we think about reusing them, then we need to uh, move that forward. But the manager will plan on a Council meeting with giving a report back to the Council.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you.

**Quinton Zondervan:** Thank you. Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair. So I- I don't understand why we can't build housing on top of parking.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Ms. Peterson, do you have an answer? Ms. Farooq?

**Lisa Peterson:** Yeah, no, I mean, I think we could. I think it's a cost issue, but certainly you can build housing on top of parking.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you, Councillor Zondervan. Council McGovern.

**Marc McGovern:** Uh, thank you, Madam Chair. Um, sort of a different, I want to focus on maybe a different avenue here. Um, you know we certainly all know that we you know that we need a lot more affordable housing than we have. But I, I do want to ask a little bit about uh, the access piece because of- and this goes to I know that we've talked to CDD about inclusionary and what is required uh, to qualify for inclusionary. I know that there are some things that- for the affordable housing. Uhm you know, some of the things that have to be required. Um, but a lot of the folks that I talk to um, really struggle to get proper documentation the and it drags things out. Um, so I'm wondering what, um, especially, you know, someone is uh, homeless. Um, so I'm wondering what are the... and , and Maura, you had mentioned that access was one of the things you were looking at. So, what are you looking at? What do you see as the biggest obstacles and how do we... I mean, there are some things we probably can't do much about. You need a Social Security card. You need to get a Social Security card. Um, but I wonder if there are just some things that we can do to, um, better support people and, and help people kind of move through the bureaucratic sort of nightmare that this often is, especially for folks who are in really extremely vulnerable situations.

**Maura Pensak:** I guess I'll just start with the service piece because that's, um, maybe the most... I don't know. I'll just start with service piece. Um, and you know, we've all talked about a little bit of additional capacity. I mean, I think



some of it is requirements that we have to look at that I know folks are looking at. Um, but the other thing- the other piece is just getting a Social Security card or understanding, despite the best efforts of creating a list and, and having it, you know, be as clear as possible. Um, folks do have a problem. You know, they struggle. We had someone today that, um, you know, has met with CHA. They were very clear in terms of what was needed. It's a Normandy, um, uh, Section 8, excuse me. Um, and despite best efforts, the person could not retain it. And so that's where an extra service is needed, where, in fact, we need to spend a lot of time with that person, sitting with them, maybe even going with them to the Social Security office to get the card, um, going with him to his mom who he lives with, who is agoraphobic, who won't go out to get her bank account, her bank statement. So, um, you, you know there are there's regulations that maybe can be looked at. There's regulations that can't be changed. But for at least speaking at the ones that um, can't be changed and, and just- we just need to help people get those uh, documents. It's just you know ongoing uh, case management and probably um, you know what we're talking about is additional capacity to do that.

**Lisa Peterson:** Um, I do just um, as just um, tee it up I guess is that... we've been talking about this during the budget process a lot as more as Community Development Department and as I anticipate the um, uh, Human Services we haven't heard their budget yet but the City Manager is um, will be recommending in his budget uh, to the Council that there will be some um, a few I think several additional positions related to housing. And particularly I think what, what Maura is talking about right here about sort of the more intensive case management needing to be provided um, working with her and um, perhaps even some additional- an additional staff member in the Multi-Service Center in addition as well.

**Marc McGovern:** Well happy to hear about added capacity because I know just the people that I've sent you Maura, over the past few months this is probably a full-time job let alone everybody else. Um, and then uh, you know one of the other... I guess this is more of a comment than a question. One of the things I do want us to think about um, you know we know that there just aren't enough vouchers out there. We also know that um, you know even with vouchers I mean certainly on the market I mean if you have a voucher and you get into an HRI building or inclusionary your- the voucher covers it. Um, but we know that, that where vouchers max out and where rents start in Cambridge there is a huge gap. And these are often for folks who you know maybe earn a little too much to qualify for certain things but still not enough um, to pay their rent. So I do- I know we have talked in the past uh, about really trying to think as a City about what how we can help close that gap for, for, for people. And I know it's complicated. I know there is a program in Charleston uh, South Carolina um, a person I met I think two years ago at the NLC um, that they do this for veterans where they um, that they the City pays some money towards closing that, that gap but then they also have um, they also offer the landlord I think it's a \$10 thousand insurance policy that if someone skips out on their rent or does something to their

building some kind of incentive that not only closes that gap but gives an incentive to landlords to rent to folks who have vouchers and be part of this program. And they have taken- they have really most of their homeless- veteran homeless population is now off the street. So I just would like us to think about um, how do we do that because again as you know as Peter said you know when people come in and you say fill out this form and get on a list for a voucher and maybe in eight years you're going to get a phone call that's just not acceptable. Just I mean and I'm not saying it's anyone's fault it's just it breaks my heart it breaks everybody's heart in this room. Um, and so you know this is one of those as the federal government continues to cut lots of programs we as a City have done a good job in a lot of areas of stepping up to close that that gap. And I I think this is one area around vouchers and, and, and helping people close uh, you know, get into housing is one thing that we could do. It's, it's, it's, it's a financial investment, but luckily we we know we have finances. So I hope that's something that gets on the table and maybe the housing Committee can take it up at some point. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you Councillor and in our next round people could ask another question. But one of the things I know when I talked to my colleague, we also wanted to kind of know what kinds of issues that you wanted the Housing Committee in our short tenure to look at and we'll try to make an assessment based on what we know and the thought of and what you as our colleagues have thought about that we can try to work over in this next term. The Vice Mayor.

**Alanna M. Mallon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going to follow up on my colleagues comments um, about vouchers because I think it's important to note that Mike Johnson said at the very beginning that we have 5000 households that have currently have vouchers and that Maura has done a tremendous job in this position, in this role in helping get each special case- I mean, I thought she was only working for me. I thought the amount of cases that I had sent directly to Maura would take up 24 hours of her every day. Um, but unfortunately it really does take because inclusionary units have a high credit rating even if you have a Section 8 voucher. Um, apartment units are often owned by a real estate investment trust that has a very high credit rating. Our Section 8 voucher holders who are lucky enough to have one of those vouchers often do not go over that threshold. And you know, in the inclusionary units, the Manager is always very sad to say, well, that's, that's our policy. And sometimes you can appeal and they will waive it. But more often than not, that's not the case. And with private apartments, it's the same thing. You know, I've gone to, to apartments to see one with, you know, with some an applicant and like the person is again very, very sorry. But you know, my- the owner of the company lives in Hong Kong and this is just the way it is. We we require 650 as a and if you're homeless, if you have a Section 8 voucher, you're never going to reach that threshold. So literally we have these cases where Maura has to do everything for every single case just to- just to jump over that threshold or get somebody into that unit. And I would really like us to figure out how to, particularly in our inclusionary units, how to we are placing a lot of Section 8 voucher holders into those units. Is that right? So how, how can

we really work on what the challenges are so that we don't have to have Maura or one of her staff or a City Councillor really getting in and really digging deep on every single case because not everybody knows that there's a Maura or not everybody knows or has access to a City Councillor. So that is something that I think it would be really great for us to think about and work on as we expand capacity. Um, and then my only other question was the Homebridge program that we um, spoke about- Chris spoke about earlier. We had asked for additional funding for this particular program um, to be added into next year's budget or be thought about. And I'm wondering, you know, now that we're talking about secret stuff that happens at budget hearings, is that something that has been brought up uh, as something that we're going to be doing in the next year's budget? Not secret. I wasn't meaning secret.

**Chris Cotter:** Uh, yes. So um, the way that Homebridge is funded is it's funded from the Affordable Housing Trust. So uh, what we do is uh, manage the the funds that the trust has committed to Homebridge, monitoring buyers who have commitments, monitoring the number of applicants who are coming in looking for those uh, commitments and if we think that we need more funding we go back and ask for an additional commitment and we've never, never gotten a no and we've never had to say to a buyer uh, we don't have the funds to give the commitment with the exception of uh, buyers who earn over the program income limit which is a hundred percent of median income. So uh, we did uh, uh, get uh, the Policy Order you all passed last fall uh, asking that we look at the income limit for Homebridge and to see if there's a way that it can be increased to 120 percent of median. A few years ago we did have um, uh, some mitigation funds which we were made a- available in a pilot offering to middle income households earning up to 120 percent and we got uh, a fair amount of interest and had some successful buyers who were assisted in that range. Uh, so we actually just talked with the overall housing trust yesterday. Uh, it's because we think we do have a way in which we can uh, work with the trust to increase the income limit. Uh, so that we would be able to serve buyers up to 120 percent of median. It will require a little bit of a uh, of work with the trust. Uh, and then uh, as we do that and we increase the the limit we will certainly be looking at the the funding that's available in the program. If we feel that we need additional funding we would be asking for it from the trust.

**Alanna M. Mallon:** Okay thank you.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you Madam Vice Mayor. Councillor Carlone.

**Dennis J. Carlone:** Thank you Madam Chair and uh, to both of you for organizing this Meeting. I, I found the information really impressive and um, and I particularly like the way you're looking at the whole person. Scholarships, training, um, social, and um, that's a very advanced way of looking at this. What I wanted to ask about um, was building on what my colleagues mentioned, site purchases. Um, as I understand it, at least recently, um, the City pays for the land and then leases it back to developers. Has that been the standard that we're now using for new purchases?

**Chris Cotter:** I guess I'll take that question. So no, what we have done um, really since the market got so heated that buyers had to uh, uh, perform under purchase contracts within a matter of months is to use the funding that the Affordable Housing Trust has as essentially an acquisition loan uh, to purchase the property with a loan typically on a short term. Uh, that then gets uh, refinanced and reworked and typically becomes part of the permanent financing for an affordable housing development once uh, the uh, housing provider gets all their funds together knows what they're going to build and and moves forward into construction. Uh, but the uh, having access to the funds uh, through the affordable housing trust has really been the difference and it has allowed us to act on those opportunities where we've been able to uh, go from an idea to a closing in you know two months say uh, with a commitment of the trust which meets often enough that we're able to to get new requests to them uh, so that the uh, the non-profits and the housing authority can move quickly and you know hopefully as quickly as most buyers in the market though it is increasingly difficult to, to deal with people who walk around with checkbooks and you can just close in cash in a matter of days.

**Dennis J. Carlone:** So to answer- ask this question in a different way, I take it then none of the recent projects are leased land agreements with the City. I thought that was the case. I thought I was told.

**Chris Cotter:** No there there may be projects that have um, leases but not um, they're not uh, leases that are put in place for the acquisition. Uh, leases sometimes can be part of the permanent financing structure for a development as a way to uh, bring funding in uh, to, to layer the funding in a way that that works for all funders. Uh, but the acquisitions are typically pretty straightforward. So the new street I think that Carl mentioned is a good example. It was I think a \$9 million And so uh, Just-A-Start made a request to the Affordable Housing Trust for a \$9 million loan and we were able to approve that given what we saw as the, the potential for development there. Uh, and close on that loan in a matter of say six weeks uh, so they could purchase the land. So we will expect that as they move forward with development and uh, get permits to build the building. We'll know what they're- they'll plan to build. They'll then uh, bring in other funders. We'll then revisit uh, that loan to see uh, does that funding need to remain in the project permanently or is there the ability to repay some of that if we're able to bring in other funders? Uh, or more than likely there may be a need for additional funds to fund some of the construction and at that point we'll then work with Just-A-Start and all project funders to put together the financing package for, for a building there.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you Mr. Cotter. Thank you Councillor Carlone. A question that I had just very quickly is do you see a time where we might be able to get to a place where we have like a universal Application? And when a person comes to, to apply for housing some questions are just the same. Name, address, phone number, email, etc and so forth. And then of course each program has its nuances. And it, it, it's, it seems as though with technology and everything being what it is, it must be some way to make it a little easier because if you have, if

you apply to one, two, three, four programs, it's four different Applications. It seems like there should just be a way to make it easier for anyone that was applying to be one and done and then anything that's specific to inclusionary or Just-A-Start or the Housing Authority, then you ask those additional questions. So I guess it's open to everyone. Do we see us ever getting to a place that we can make it just a little bit easier for people to apply when they're applying, particularly when they're applying to so many programs in the same City because this is what happens. People apply for inclusionary and swear they applied for CHA. They'll say, "Oh, I have an application with the City." Well, what City? And they may mean the Housing Authority. It could be inclusionary. You have to kind of drill down. So if there was some sort of universal Application, they would have applied at least initially. And then again, it, it gets more specific depending on what the program requirements are. So I just throw that open. Do you see that anywhere in the future? Don't fight {Inaudible.}

**Maura Pensak:** Uh, I should just defer to you, but we, we started the conversation, um, CDD Just-A-Start, um, in HRI, um, on exactly that issue. Um, and, um, it's, it's quite complicated and there's some legal issues around it. Um, I know one thing that Just-A-Start just got, um, approved was to at least have on Applications that they can share a checkbox. Correct me if I'm wrong. A checkbox so uh, folks who complete that Application can check that they want the information sent to other potential places. Um, but I should have just deferred to you.

**Carl Nagy-Kirchland:** There's something else that's going on. It's a group called, uh, with a product called the Housing Navigator.

**E. Denise Simmons:** The Housing Navigator?

**Carl Nagy-Kirchland:** Navigator. Uh, and this is an attempt to have a sort of master Application for all affordable housing uh, in the state and also to be on a digital level. I think what drives us nuts all the time is having all this paper uh, and trying to aggregate information when you have a lot of Applications is very difficult. So this is, uh, I think, the good news is a very well-intentioned strong group of people and they are trying to enlist uh, support at the highest levels in state affordable housing. So stay tuned, but I think if that could be a breakthrough the type you're looking for.

**E. Denise Simmons:** That would be tremendous. And then lastly, and this is more to the uh, City of Cambridge, but I guess it could be used amongst any of you or either of you, management companies and the despicable and not so nice treatment some of our residents, particularly in the IZ program, um, receive. I would say all management companies are not created equal but we have instances where one management company will say and we all know it's not true you don't have access to the amenities or you can't use the pool after 9:00. Or um, you can't be sitting out in front of the building and it just- it's just- it's not level it's not even I know Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler and I talked a good deal about is there some way that we can get at some sort of training or something to have these management companies treat our residents, who have the- deserve and have the

right to be in these buildings a lot better than they do. I feel like to tell the truth you know who gets up.

**Chris Cotter:** So I appreciate the question and certainly we've heard cases in buildings that we're involved with with inclusionary units where there are concerns and, and often legitimate concerns. So a couple of things um, we have um, first been talking with other departments is to see what type of training we could put together. We've talked with uh, the Fair Housing Commission to see would it be helpful to offer uh, training to periodically to have people come in and particularly as new staff come into management companies to have them- have the opportunity to, to talk with folks in the Fair Housing Commission or from other City departments just to get the perspective and help set some of the expectations. The challenge is often that it is uh, really uh, uh, can be with uh, particular buildings. It can be with particular, particular managers. It's often a staff. So really it can be it's going to be addressed on a number of different levels. So but we certainly have heard a lot of the stories that you all have heard as well and have been thinking about how we can best try to work with management companies to address that uh, so that residents feel that they're treated fairly and equitably. And so to that end we are uh, anxiously awaiting uh, responses to our RFP that's been reissued to find a consultant to do a study of experiences of residents living in affordable housing. So we're hoping uh, to have those responses this month and then to look at them as quickly so that we can identify a team to do that type of analysis for us that you can really get us uh, some quantitative data to go on top of the qualitative information that we've all heard so that we can better uh, contextualize the issue and then hopefully get some ideas and some recommendations for proactive steps that we, we can take to better position folks to be part of the solution rather than just having to be responding to the issues when they come and you know, we're responding to things after the fact, which is often the case at this point.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you. Uh, just briefly before we go to Public Comment, I would, uh, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler and I would like to have an idea of what, and you kind of started us off, uh, Councillor, saying what I'd like to see, uh, us look at it the next year. And so starting with you, Councillor Carlone, what one or two things would you like to put on the table or- for us to consider as we're thinking about and planning the Agenda? Is there an issue that you is important to you now? I can't promise or we won't promise that we're going to get to everything, but we want to have a sense of what's on, on the Council's mind. So if you could lead us in that Councillor Carlone, one or two things.

**Dennis J. Carlone:** Sure. I'll, I'll tell you what I would like only if you promise that you'll get to it. No, I'm kidding. I understand there are many issues. It seems to me, and this is what I was alluding to-that the biggest problem we have other than not enough money, although everybody on the Council pretty much wants to increase the money, is getting the land. And land costs have risen so much because frankly the City policies among other issues. So is there a way for the City to purchase land and lease it to the- to the developers in a way that we can solve more problems. Um, ground floor retail City owns the retail or, or pre case

space. The City owns the pre case space on the first floor. And the developers don't pay for that. The City does. Yes, it's more money. What I'm getting at in a simple way is can we reformat the way land is bought and the value of it is transferred to the developers in a way that helps development as well as helps build the whole City.

**E. Denise Simmons:** And, and is there any other thing that you want to add? Or is that pretty much your thing...

**Dennis J. Carlone:** Well, uh, I think that getting to know each of the three here and maybe Frost Terrace teams I think is helpful and builds more trust. And I mean I learned things tonight. I knew you all did other things but I didn't know it to the extent I heard. Scholarships blew my mind, I'll be honest. And um, I- I think that could be helpful. Um, I love this whole group coming together and we can be honest with each other. Um, still think we should be leasing land, but nevertheless, um, no, that- that's my prime. My prime issue is the acquisition of land and what that means. Uh, I've written about this and I firmly believe the City should downright the value of the land. We have the money. And that would lessen problems just- and use the CRA Cambridge Redevelopment Authority to do that. That's one of the things they can do. But um, that's a bigger picture about how we structure this. I think we have to be more creative than the way we're doing it now. And as creative as that is and way ahead of everybody else, the reality means we have to do more in a creative way.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you. Vice Mayor.

**Alanna M. Mallon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think, you know, going back to what I said earlier, thinking about how we can really strengthen our voucher program and figuring out where those challenges and hurdles are for um, our voucher holders who are 5000 voucher holders who are trying to access either market rate or um, these inclusionary units and also looking at inclusionary preferences and updating those and making that a focus early on so that we can get that um, done and and move forward on that. Those are my two things.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you.

**Marc McGovern:** Thank you Madam Chair. Um, one thing that I guess is sort of I don't think this would take up a whole meeting but one thing I'd like to, to know a little bit more about um, because we've- and I don't know if this is as big a problem as I've heard it to be, you know, having surveyed everybody. But you know, given that, you know, I know that the Just-A-Start, uh, Just-A-Start, HRI and the Housing Authority do have all these other programs to help people with upward mobility for lack of a better term. And I just wonder, I, and I know this, we brought this up with inclusionary, um, you know if you- how often does that lead to a cliff effect where it's great that you get a new job. It's great that you get a degree. It's great that but then do you end up pricing yourself out of a voucher or pricing yourself out of, of the unit and whatever job you get could be just enough to lose the benefits that you have but certainly not enough to go out into the market in Cambridge. And so I worry a little bit about, about those folks. Um, I'd

like to know a little bit more about that. And I just thank you um, Madam Chair for bringing up uh, because I was going to mention the, the same thing around treatment. And it's not just in the inclusionary units. I think a couple years ago, I'm not sure if Debra was there when she was at Just-A-Start, but I know Peter um, and, and Mike were there that we talked about um, social workers and it's National Social Workers Month and I am one so I'm going to put this plug in um, that you know sometimes the managers in the buildings aren't either their focus is different maybe they don't have the training but there are a lot of issues that come up for tenants that really need a more clinical social worker type training and education. And we had talked about, you know, whether or not there could be some way to um, create that for tenants. Because in addition to, you know, I think we do a really good job for the most part on the quality of, of, of our housing compared to other places. But there are lots of issues that come up for folks that they- in their units and in their buildings that aren't always handled, I think, as compassionately as they could be or should be. And so thinking about- it's not just what you get. You should be lucky that you get a unit. But what is, you know, that's your home, right? And then it goes back to the management companies as well. And by management company, I don't just mean for the inclusionary, but I mean, you know, Wynn and all the others in terms of, you know, responding to tenant concerns, you know, conditions of the buildings. We, we just have to figure that out a little better and, and um, because when I when I'm just running through my head of the calls that I get a lot of them are around those types of issues. And um, so it's not just about- so I'm trying to focus a little bit not just on we know we need more units. We know we need all that. But what about the quality of life for the people who live in those units? And how can we really do a better job of, of improving that? And I know we all want to but let's just bring, you know, brainstorm and think about how we do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you, Councillor McGovern. Councillor Zondervan.

**Quinton Zondervan:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you, I, I really have two priorities. One is that we need to be building on the properties we already own. And the second is that we need tenant protections.

**E. Denise Simmons:** I'm sorry? Protections.

**Quinton Zondervan:** Tenant protections. We have 20,000 people on our- our waiting list. There's no way that we can build ourselves out of this problem. And, and as we continue to gentrify the City and displace people, we're just adding to that list faster than we can possibly house them. So the obvious solution is to prevent people from being displaced and the only way that we know how to do that is to protect those that are tenants so that they are protected from arbitrary rent increases. So we just need to get at that problem. Otherwise we're just going to be sitting here 10 years from now discussing the same questions. Thank you.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, anything you want to add in terms of...



**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. Yeah, um, we'd love to do a meeting at some point, um, on universities and housing and the situation there creating more and creating affordable housing for students, junior faculty, um, some of the uh, creating an Office of Housing Stability and a Cambridge Community Land Trust is something we would like to talk about at some point and then uh, some of the things on the tenant protection side. Just cause eviction, uh, condo conversion which was something that came out of the Tenant Displacement Task Force uh, tenant right to purchase rent control stabilization are all things that would require Home Rule Petitions but still worth talking about I think as a Committee.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you. So at this point we're going to move to Public Comment. We have a sign up sheet uh, Public Comment is a part of the Meeting where you uh, get to up- you the audience or the, the constituent of the folks that have joined us this afternoon evening get to speak to the Council for up, up to three minutes. So please, when you come to the mic, give your name and your address, uh, so that we can have it for the record. Then you can speak for three minutes, and we would politely ask you to yield the floor. Please, when you speak, speak clearly so that the, what do you call this stuff? The transcription software can pick up what you're saying and you'll be correctly uh, documented in the in the record. Uh, so, uh, before I yield the floor to my colleague who is going to do Public Comment, if people can start to please line up um, here again at the mic, he will call the names. And so with that I will yield the floor to my colleague who is going to take us through uh, Public Comment.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. We can start with Hassan Rashid.

**Hassan Rashid:** Okay, here we go. Okay, um, uh, peace be unto you. I'm Hassan Rashid. I reside at 820 Massachusetts Avenue. Okay, um, and uh, yeah. Housing, housing that- housing that, uh, affordable to people at a wider range of income levels are in short supply across Cambridge and significant inequities in access to housing still exist creating disparate impact. The homeless and renters at the lowest income levels face the greatest challenges with housing costs. Now in Cambridge our homeless service systems have become uh, increasingly bottlenecked by scarcity of decent housing uh, at a sustainable cost and achieving our shared goals of ending homelessness remains out of reach. Conversations on housing affordability and homelessness should begin to take center stage here in Cambridge. Partners to aligning thinking and uh, a discussion should be the major- the major, excuse me, the (math) and order of the day in the local affordable homeless housing arena. Here in Cambridge, Mass, expanding housing access to people who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness should always be foremost in the uh, mentality and mindsets- mentality and mindsets of local politicians and others linked to the affordable house- affordable homeless poverty housing arena. Until this actually happens, the state of affordable housing in Cambridge, Massachusetts will remain abnormal. Thank you.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Next we have Valerie A. Bonds.

**Valerie A. Bonds:** Yes. Savings bonds. I have to bounce out. Thank you. My name is Valerie Bonds. I live at 808 Memorial Drive and I've lived there for 33

years. Before my time starts, I'd like to thank Peter Daly for his effort and persistence and uh, to keep the label of affordable housing at our complex. And I believe many of you were whispering in my ear when I wrote this presentation. Uh, first of all, good evening to members of the City Council. How are you? I come before you as a Cambridge resident of over 40 years who now is a member of the baby boomer generation and a pension recipient find myself having to rely significantly on elected officials, appointed City officials, thank you, And housing owners, subsidy providers, and development managers for my health and welfare who in the long run contribute and maintain the quality of life for me and my neighbors. As I address the Council and members seated at this table regarding affordable housing, I speak of my home that resides in the 808 812 Memorial Drive housing complex. A home I have maintained, excuse me, since December of 1987 until the present over 33 years. Affordable housing is on the minds of many throughout this state. Affordable housing has raised issues regarding placement, diversity, and economics. Whose neighborhood will welcome affordable housing? Why has the changing demographics of affordable housing affected services, treatment, respect by owners, subsidy providers, and management? And most of all, what does affordable housing mean and for whom? If I was still employed as a teacher and a member of this community, I do not believe my income at that time would have afforded me the ability to remain in Cambridge, a City that provided a safe community for my son and I, an educational system that is engaged and committed, and a Government that has been inclusive and diverse, offering City residents the opportunity to actively participate in the manner by which we are governed. Now it seems in order to live in Cambridge, an individual or family must either be wealthy or on welfare, supported by supplemental agencies, government assistance, and that depends on, of course, if you're qualified. At your request I can produce from HRI management for rent increases for renovations and repairs at 808 Memorial Drive housing for the years 2011, 2015, 2017, 2018, and twice in 2019. The final approvals for our rent was a 179.18 percent rent increase to take effect March 1st. I believe that many residents understand the need for rent increases to sustain and maintain the affordability of these units, apartments, our homes. One resident suggested having a bake sale to assist in contributing to the \$70 million owners and managers feel is necessary to make repairs and renovations that have been going on in this complex since 2011.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** That was your three minutes. That was your three minutes.

**Valerie A. Bonds:** Time's up?

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Yes.

**Valerie A. Bonds:** Oh okay, thank you. I'll leave this in that? All right.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. Um, I have Bill Cunningham signed up as a "maybe". Bill, would you like to speak?

**Bill Cunningham:** Bill Cunningham, 6 Newtown Court. I'm the Office Manager of Alliance of Cambridge Tenants, which is an all volunteer group whose basic uh, role is to serve as citywide representative of the residents of public housing, Cambridge Housing Authority. However, we also deal with anybody that calls us, even people who aren't living in affordable housing. I'd just like to um, outline a basic difference among the types of affordable housing that there are in Cambridge. Maybe everybody already knows this, but it should be very clear. In public housing, even though it's now RAD, the management is the is employed by the owner, by the effective owner, the housing authority. In addition to that, um, there are certain rights. The rights to organize Tenant Councils to be support- to be supported by management and the right to grievance processes which are built into public housing and have been carried over by the housing authority to RAD. So we get complaints uh, it's hard to manage housing and there are always problems between tenants and management. And we get complaints from people who uh, on the housing authority as well as private management firms. And we should re understand that HRI and um, Just-A-Start they don't manage their own properties. They, they hire management companies to do it. So this is not that different from many other types of affordable housing that exists in the City that are preceded. There are many buildings that preceded uh, inclusionary that have affordable and they're managed and owned by completely different entities. The point that I'm making is that the tenants don't have- they're not empowered in these buildings. They don't have rights. And this is one of the reasons why an organization like ours would support rent control because only, only rent control actually diffuses essentially the same kinds of rights to administrative law access, simple access to empowerment that the housing authority provides all the time. All housing authorities do. So um, that's really all.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. Does anyone not signed up for Public Comment who would like to speak?

**Dewayne Callender:** {Inaudible} my name is Dewayne Callender and um, I work with Act II and I'm a voucher holder for um, Section 8.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Address please.

**Dewayne Callender:** Oh, 160 Cambridge Park Drive. And you talked about inclusionary housing. Um, when I got it I didn't realize what it was. And now that I know what it is and how it works, um, I had to walk around the building corridors. There's three corridors that go to the elevator. And there's a safety door that's right before my door. So that door would stay locked at certain hours. But I had to walk around to get to the elevator for like two years. And then I- it came to me to get them to change it to put a fob at the door so I wouldn't have to walk all the way around for two years. So I heard some people speaking about um, how the tenants are being treated and stuff like that. But um, I just wanted to put that out there so that you can understand of some of the things that need to be changed.

**E. Denise Simmons:** And would you please repeat your name again slowly?

**Dewayne Callender:** Oh, Dewayne Callender.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Dewayne Callender. Thank you.

**Dewayne Callender:** Yes. Thank you.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. Is there anyone else? Uh, yep. Lee Ferris.

**Lee Ferris:** Hi, good evening. Lee Ferris, 269 Norfolk Street. Just a few questions that I didn't um, hear addressed. Um, I went to a hearing recently for a person who- a developer wants to build micro units in Central Square. And he is claiming that micro units are now the thing that have the longest waiting list. And so that uh, goes against what I've heard in other Housing Committee meetings before. So I'm wondering if collectively the City could come up with some um, this goes to the keeping different lists. Collectively come up with a what are the total unit mixes that we need to meet let's say at least the first you know next 200 people on the wait list. Um, and I also would be interested in specifically are micro units something that we need. Um, similarly some kind of unified understanding of what are the incomes of people that are waiting. Um, I know CHA has very low incomes and other different kinds of housing have higher levels of incomes. How does the housing that we have and that we expect to have and match the income levels of the people that are waiting? So some kind of assessment of that going forward. I think we need these kind of things to figure out what kinds of housing are we trying to build and acquire. Um, lastly some addressing of the um, change on two things that I have heard a little bit about at housing meetings. One is that um, there can now be a voucher rate determined by zip code, which means that it can go much higher than what it has been in the past. And I'd like some kind of um, report on are we using that here in Cambridge? How many instances are we using that? Is it helping people access housing that otherwise couldn't access it? Um, and also the change in um, whether a building can be 100% Cambridge preference or now uh, the understanding is that that's not the case anymore. So how is that going to affect us going forward? Lastly, I just want to say that on the question from Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler about Normandy, um, I don't think we were- the answer was fully responsive. There was not anything in the answer about how to be proactive in helping to consider facing that. Thank you.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. Seeing no one else. Oh, there is. Yep.

**Rachel Ann Worden:** May I speak?

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Yep. Please do.

**Rachel Ann Worden:** Okay. Hello, my name is Rachel Ann Worden and I'm here because I'm motivated with the issues of um, tenants unions and buildings because I'm interested in leverage between tenants and management. However, I just have a question on homelessness because I'm pretty ignorant on the details. And it seems to me that it is a national issue, a state issue, and I'm curious to know whether if it's anybody deals with it on those levels. I just a question.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Ms. Worden, what's your address please?

**Rachel Ann Worden:** Pardon?

**E. Denise Simmons:** Your address please.

**Rachel Ann Worden:** Oh, I'm sorry. 411 Franklin Street.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you.

**Rachel Ann Worden:** You're welcome.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Yes, please come up to the mic.

**Victoria Berglund:** If I can't see anyone, this will make it easier for me to say what I have to say. Um, first of all, I, I only have, I'm not going to be up here that long. It's been complaints coming from those who are in...

**E. Denise Simmons:** Excuse me, before you get started, name?

**Victoria Berglund:** Oh, my name is Victoria, last name Berglund, and I live in um, Lincoln Way in Cambridge. And um...

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you.

**Victoria Berglund:** Pardon me?

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you.

**Victoria Berglund:** Oh and for quite a long time we've been hearing complaints and I've been hearing quite a few of them personally in uh, that residents who live in um, how can I say it? Um, inclusionary zoning buildings have been mistreated in many ways. They have no power. And I don't really believe that this um, having them social work training is going to help. This is instilled in a lot of them and on top of that I'm quite sure um, once a few residents find out where they're you know who they are that also they put in- is input from them. And I know this Committee has been heard this many times if you haven't. I think that there's something should be really done about that. Even if you get a few group- people who live in there and just sit down and ask them what sort of complaints do they have regarding how they're being treated by management? Also um, I think the Committee should try to make an effort to bring more people out from- that are residents of both affordable housing and an inclusionary zoning. And it- because this is you know, you see the same faces almost all the time and something can be done, but we need help so we can bring more and you can listen to what they have to say. Okay, thank you.

**Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler:** Thank you. Anyone else? Seeing none, uh, Public Comment is closed. Turn it back over to the Co-Chair. Councillor Simmons.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Thank you. So first of all, I want to thank everyone for their attentions and their time. I know that there are people- there are a lot of different activities going on this evening. And, and so I'm um, I'm glad that we've stuck, stuck to our schedule in such a way that people can get out and participate on

whatever level that so chooses- they so choose. So we have a list of what your comments were about questions and some of the things that you'd like to see us do. And Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler and I will sit down and kind of get it all together and come back to this group uh, to our Committee with some suggestions about what kinds of things we can ta- tackle with things we might have to put on the long list of things to do. I want to thank our community-based organizations and Ms. Penzac for coming this evening to hear from you. This will not be the last time that we'll get together. One question I just want to put on the table was I don't know this is more for CDD. Did we get our 2019 inclusionary report? The 2000 the because if we didn't when that- when is that?

**Chris Cotter:** No we are- we will be putting that together and providing it to you.

**E. Denise Simmons:** In a couple of months? In a few weeks?

**Chris Cotter:** In a couple of months.

**E. Denise Simmons:** In a couple of months?

**Chris Cotter:** Yes as you can see from the some of the numbers where we've been pretty focused on the actual uh, the filling of the units in the program so we've not had time to complete the report.

**E. Denise Simmons:** And I certainly appreciate it but it's also a very important document that kind of informs our policy making. So uh, I also want to just for the record to make sure people know the Mayor apologizes for not being here today. This, this Meeting coincide with the School Committee Meeting, which is a standing- standing obligation of the Mayor. The first and third Tuesdays in particular and most Tuesdays in general. So she does give her apologies, but she will be uh, watching the tape or talking to us to find out what happened this evening. Again, I appreciate your being here. I'd like to entertain a Motion to adjourn. On a Motion by Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler to adjourn the Meeting, all those in favor say aye.

**Group:** Aye.

**E. Denise Simmons:** Opposed? The ayes have it the Meeting is now adjourned.

## **CERTIFICATION**

I, Casey Kern, a transcriber for Intellectix, do hereby certify that said proceedings were listened to and transcribed by me and were prepared using standard electronic transcription equipment under my direction and supervision; and I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the proceedings is a full, true, and accurate transcript to the best of my ability.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 30th day of September 2024.

*Casey Kern*