



HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

12:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Call to Order

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Carlone	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Health and Environment Committee was held on Tuesday, November 5, 2023. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:30 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Nolan. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

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

- Councillor Azeem – Absent
- Councillor Carlone – Present/Remote
- Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Zondervan – Present/Remote

Present – 5, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks (Attachment A) and noted that the call of the meeting was to review and discuss the City’s updated Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (NHMP) in order to prepare for natural hazards including climate change. The Chair shared that Mayor Siddiqui was present at the meeting. Also in attendance were Owen O’Riordan, Deputy City Manager, as well as Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD) who was joined by Leila Mekia, Climate resilience Project Planner for CDD, Kathy Watkins, Commission of Public Works (DPW), Deputy Chief Colin Walsh from the Cambridge Fire Department (CFD), Crystal Rosa, Language Access Manager for the Human Rights Department, Rachel Tanenhaus, Coordinator-Ada Executive Director for the Department of Human Services (DHSP), and Robin Seidel from Weston and Sampson. Nancy Porter from the Department of Public Health and Marlees Owayda, Community Engagement Manager for CDD, joined via Zoom.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Leila Mekia who introduced Robin Seidel from Weston and Sampson. Robin Seidel gave a presentation titled “Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2023”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview of the NHMP for Cambridge, including a review of

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the City's previous HMP, FEMA and MEMA requirements, the value of having a HMP, and overview of the 2023 Cambridge NHMP, and the next steps after Council approval and submittal to MEMA.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan opened Public Comment.

Grace Seifu shared their excitement for the plan and noted that it is very important considering how climate change is affecting the community now.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Deputy City Manager O'Riordan who shared his excitement for establishing an Emergency Management Director in the near future. The Deputy City Manager noted that having an Emergency Management Director and Emergency Management Department would help to coordinate efforts across City departments to be prepared for emergencies.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Leila Mekia who thanked everyone who has been involved with the planning process and has dedicated their time creating the report to present to the Council.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Deputy Chief Walsh who noted the importance of monitoring plans and communications within departments as a key factor in ensuring the City is prepared for an emergency, and shared that it is also important to continue to reevaluate and monitor the effectiveness of plans periodically.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zondervan who asked for additional information relative to coral reefs and water quality. Kathy Watkins and Iram Farooq were available to respond, noting that coral reefs are not something the City has looked at, noting that the plan is focused on actions the City can take with hazards that are in proximity. He noted that going forward with partnerships it is something to add to the discussion. Councillor Zondervan encouraged the team to use nature-based solutions to mitigate hazards. Kathy Watkins shared that the City is planning on incorporating more green and gray infrastructure and offered comments relative to the combined sewer overflow (CSO) plan. Robin Seidel shared that the expanded action list in the NHMP provides actions with nature-based solutions.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Carlone who shared his excitement about the discussion and the detailed report that was presented. Councillor Carlone highlighted the importance of the City having a goal to include more open space, noting that Cambridge currently has half of the national average of open space, which is a big problem. Councillor Carlone additionally shared that he hopes there are zoning plans included with design guidelines.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor McGovern who thanked everyone involved for their hard work and the presentation.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan shared her excitement for seeing all the different departments come together to bring the plan to life. Councillor Nolan had a clarifying question on how the plan addresses all the different hazards that could happen. Robin Seidel shared that the goal was to take a holistic approach addressing the plans and to address them from a multi hazard perspective to best be prepared. Robin Seidel noted that the plan addresses hazards that are affecting the community now and looks at hazards that will affect the community in the future. Councillor Nolan noted the importance of making sure that Urban Forestry Master Plan coincides and works with the NHMP. Councillor Nolan asked how effective outreach efforts

have been. Marless Owayda, Crystal Rosa, and Rachel Tanenhaus shared the many efforts that have been made on outreach within their departments, and noted how crucial it is to make sure outreach is inclusive to everyone. Councillor Nolan asked for further information regarding the CSO and how the city is looking at alternative solutions to help benefit projects in addition to what is already in place. Kathy Watkins shared that the City is looking at the Amelia Earnhart and Charles River dams as critical regional improvements to help with water intrusion and flooding.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan had a question from Mayor Siddiqui who had to leave the meeting early. Mayor Siddiqui asked how the evacuation plans work. Deputy Chief Walsh shared that it is hard to project what an evacuation plan is going to be because no hazard is the same, but ensured the Committee that through many trainings and drills with various agencies, and continued communication, the City is prepared to evacuate if it were necessary. Deputy Chief Walsh noted that CFD is one of the most trained departments in the country, as well as the Police Department, and many other departments in the City. Councillor Zondervan shared concerns about not having an exact plan in place. Deputy Chief Walsh reiterated that the City does have plans in place, but cannot specifically answer what the evacuation plan is due to the many different circumstances that play a role in what the hazard may be that warrants an evacuation plan. Councillor Zondervan shared that he hopes in future conversations there will be a plan in place that will be able to be explained better.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan offered closing comments and thanked everyone who was involved in creating the NHMP and shared her excitement for moving this plan and report forward.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Councillor Carlone – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00p.m.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Councillor Nolan’s opening statement.

Clerk’s Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/629?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=52ff7845bc87551010f72f8760989b20

Discussion

A communication was received from Climate Resilience Project Planner, Leila Mekias, transmitting a presentation regarding an update to the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.

A communication was received from Climate Resilience Project Planner, Leila Mekias, transmitting a report regarding the City of Cambridge Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2023 Update.

A communication was received from Climate Resilience Project Planner, Leila Mekias, transmitting a document from Weston and Sampson to the Steering Committee regarding the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

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Adjournment

Attachment A – Opening Statement from Councillor Nolan

We are here today to review the city's Hazard Mitigation Plan, which seeks to address natural hazards including and especially as it relates to the climate crisis. The council needs to approve this plan in order to qualify for certain grants from FEMA. It's been several years since the city has had an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan, so I'm grateful to the city staff for doing the work to develop and update this plan. So today, we will hear from city staff at CDD on why we need to adopt this plan, the development process, and the specifics of our city's plan. The goal, which I think CDD will outline, is to review the details of this plan today, here in committee, and answer questions, so that we can forward the plan to the full city council for adoption before the end of the term. The full mitigation plan is upwards of 800 pages that were developed over the course of years, so there will obviously be details we cannot and will not get to today and will have to review before adoption of the full council, but I hope that the city's presentation will be able to lead us to the sections of greatest importance so we can review some of the details today.