



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Economic Development and University Relations Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss cannabis policy issues, including the potential allowance for repackaging of products at local dispensaries, the 1800-foot minimum distance requirement between cannabis businesses, and the lack of zoning provisions for social consumption establishments that are now permitted under state law

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Tuesday, December 17, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Toner. 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.

- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 5. Quorum established.

The Chair, Councillor Toner offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting is to discuss cannabis policy issues, including the potential allowance for repackaging of products at local dispensaries, the 1800-foot minimum distance requirement between cannabis businesses, and the lack of zoning provisions for social consumption establishments that are now permitted under state law. Present at the meeting was Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Planner, Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Development, and Megan Bayer, City Solicitor. Also present at the meeting were Mayor Simmons, Councillor Zusy, and Councillor Nolan.

Co-Chair Toner opened Public Comment.

Suzanne Blier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, offered comments related to Town Gown Report. Chair Toner noted that that topic was not on the Agenda for today.

Michael Pires, 701 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA, and was in favor of the City revisiting the by-laws around repackaging, noting it would benefit businesses, and also offered comments on the 1800-foot buffer zone.

Kaedyn Odermann, 19519 Josephine Street, spoke in favor of streamline services and provided examples of the challenges businesses face with delays and offered also comments on the 1800-foot buffer and social consumption.

Michael Latulippe, 966 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA, Blue River Terps Marijuana Retailer, spoke in favor of changes to repackaging, extending business permits, and challenges with the 1800-foot buffer,

Richard Harding offered comments that were in favor of waving the 3% local tax and commented on repackaging changes.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Christina DiLisio who gave a presentation titled “Retail Cannabis Industry Updates”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who made a motion to close public comment. Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who asked what type of complaints are received from residents. Christina DiLisio responded and shared that CDD has not received any complaints relative to cannabis retail stores and explained that there is always a community meeting within the process of owners obtaining their licenses, which gives residents in the community the opportunity to ask questions and bring up any concerns.

Chair Toner recognized Mayor Simmons who thanked staff for their presentation and the information that was shared. Mayor Simmons asked if more information could be shared regarding the 1800 buffer zone, which was discussed on packet page 24, and raised concerns about the possibility of zoning changes. Christina DiLisio and Megan Bayer both responded by providing a brief overview of why the 1800 buffer zone was put in place and how proposed changes to the zoning would affect current and future business owners. Mayor Simmons offered the suggestion of bringing owners to the table for more discussion and feedback on how this would affect them if a change is made.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who echoed similar comments made by Mayor Simmons and noted the importance of prioritizing A and B applicants. Christina DiLisio explained that if an applicant in priority decided to transfer ownership, they would only be able to transfer to an A or B applicant. In addition, Christina DiLisio provided more information on the 1800-foot buffer and examples of how it applies to A and B applicants and 50-51% ownership. The Vice Mayor stressed that however the zoning moves forward, it is important not to hurt businesses.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who offered suggestions for creating a required timeline for applicants throughout the applications process, noting that it may help support the streamline system, which she is in favor of.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Zusy who asked if there were any downsides or unintended consequences with cannabis retail stores, how many stores have opened and closed since this was permitted in Cambridge, and if there have been any financial analysis done on current businesses. Christina DiLisio responded and shared that no downsides have been brought to the attention of the City, except what was shared in today’s presentation. She also highlighted that only two businesses have closed, both being medical facilities. Christina DiLisio shared that there have been no financial studies done, but that she has received feedback informally from businesses regarding products and finances. Christina DiLisio added that it is challenging to

find other cities with saturated business data in comparison to Cambridge, because Cambridge is different in regard to density and population to most other communities with information on financial analysis.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Siddiqui who shared that she was in favor of removing restrictions or repackaging and relocating the H.C.A. requirements, based on the information that was shared today. Councillor Siddiqui agreed with Committee members that it would be helpful to have more discussion relative to the 1800-foot buffer to talk through the potential risks and challenges that could arise as well as what the next steps would be for the possibility of social consumption, stressing the importance of community process. Councillor Siddiqui asked if the City had any information on what other communities have done to define zoning relative to social consumption. Megan Bayer shared she was not aware of what other communities have for language and noted that the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission (MA CCC) were having a meeting today around proposed regulations around social consumption licenses. Councillor Siddiqui asked for an update regarding extending the priority period. Megan Bayer explained that the City was hoping the MA CCC would have responded back with answers regarding what the City has had in place, but there has not been any definitive answers from them. Megan Bayer provided additional information regarding the priority period and added that the City will come back to the Council with recommendations if needed.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who asked if more information could be shared on the \$70,000 transportation fee and why it was removed. Christina DiLisio and Megan Bayer explained that the \$70,000 transportation fee, which was also required for other similar businesses, was part of the special permit which went away with the special permit requirements. Councillor Wilson asked if it would make sense to apply for an additional waiver ahead of the February 25, 2025 expiration in order stay in line with upcoming recommendations from the MA CCC regarding social consumption. Megan Bayer provided examples of what may happen if Cambridge was interested in creating language for social consumption if a waiver was or was not filed. Councillor Wilson suggested that a Policy Order may help with moving forward with discussions related to social consumption. Chair Toner agreed that he would like to work with the City team to create an Order, but that is not something that would be done today.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Zusy who asked if any information could be shared regarding states that have allowed social consumption sites. Christina DiLisio responded by sharing that it is challenging to collect data from other communities because they are very different than the Cambridge community and noted that she has been closely following along with what the state has been discussing regarding restrictions and concerns. Councillor Zusy asked which states were allowing social consumption. Christina DiLisio offered to share an informational map to Councillors after the meeting.

Chair Toner asked for an update on a cannabis store that was planning to open on Massachusetts Avenue and Gold Star Road. Christina DiLisio pointed out that that specific business is one of many that is in the process with the state.

Chair Toner agreed with the suggestion of having more discussion with owners at a roundtable meeting to receive feedback. Mayor Simmons also agreed it would be beneficial and important to receive recommendations from owners.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who asked what the pros and cons would be to extend the special priority period past the February 25, 2025 expiration date. Megan Bayer provided an overview of the history of the special priority period and how it applies to medical and adult use businesses, and how it supports or prevents specific situations from occurring.

Chair Toner recognized Councillor Zusy who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:31pm.

Attachment A – Communications from the public

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/922?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Specialist, transmitting a presentation regarding Retail Cannabis Industry Updates.

That the City Manager is requested to direct the appropriate City staff to enact policy that will extend the priority period for Social Equity and Equity Empowerment cannabis business applicants for a period of six months to one year, or until guidance has been received from the Cannabis Control Commission.

From: [Michael Latulippe](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Blue River Public Comment at Economic Development Meeting 12/17
Date: Tuesday, December 17, 2024 12:44:33 PM
Attachments: [Blue-River-Terps Michael Latulippe Public-Comment 12-17-2024.pdf](#)

Greetings,

Find attached our public comment from earlier at the Economic Development and University Relations Committee.

Thank you,

Michael Latulippe
Partner at Blue River™Terps Retail Stores
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Good afternoon, Committee Members.

My name is Michael Latulippe, and I'm here representing Blue River Terps, an Economic Empowerment Priority Applicant located at 966 Cambridge Street. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I'd like to touch on a few key issues that are important not only to our business but to the broader cannabis community in Cambridge.

1. Allowing In-Store Repackaging

First, I want to address the ability for retailers to repackage products in-store. State law allows this, and competing cities like Brookline have already implemented it.

Right now, we have customers requesting smaller increments—like grams and even half-grams—and without in-store repackaging, we can't meet that demand. A deli-style model would allow us to sell these smaller amounts, which makes cannabis more accessible and affordable for consumers.

It also helps us as retailers. We could highlight specific strains that have the kind of "bag appeal" needed to move products more quickly. There doesn't seem to be any data backing the current prohibition, so I ask the City to reconsider and allow us this flexibility.

2. Extending Cannabis Business Permits to 5 Years

Next, I support extending cannabis business permits to align with the Host Community Agreements. A 5-year permit increases efficiency, reduces administrative burden, and helps equity applicants stay compliant. It's a simple change that makes a big difference for businesses like mine.

3. Simplifying the Host Community Agreement Process



I've been the person in our company tasked with completing our Host Community Agreement, and I can tell you—it was one of the most intense experiences of my life.

I produced all 31 pieces of documentation required. Printing all of it out would be a monumental task. I strongly encourage the City to simplify this process and focus on what's truly essential. It's the right thing to do for equity businesses.

4. The 1,800-Foot Buffer

Unfortunately, I don't believe the 1,800-foot buffer is sufficient, especially when we're so close to Somerville, which doesn't have the same rules. This puts businesses like ours at a disadvantage.

Here's the reality: cannabis businesses can't go bankrupt in the traditional sense—we don't get federal bankruptcy protections—and we're facing intense competition. Many equity entrepreneurs were told this would be a profitable opportunity, but that's not the case for everyone.

I'm not here to argue for a cap on licenses, but I do ask the City to:

1. Protect existing equity businesses by limiting further retail licenses.
2. Extend the priority period for equity applicants indefinitely, so we can continue to grow and operate sustainably.
3. Expanding into other license types, like social consumption for new applicants.

We've already gone through a lengthy, 31-document process that was inequitable from the start. It would be unfair to let new businesses set up shop just a quarter mile away with none of the same requirements.

5. Host Community Agreement Waivers for Social Consumption

Cambridge has been a leader on equity—prioritizing equity applicants, and recently eliminating special permit requirements making it much easier for



businesses like mine to operate. Now, the City has a chance to lead again by moving beyond Host Community Agreements for new social consumption licenses.

The new hospitality license type could open doors for businesses like dermatologists, and massage therapists for topical use, yoga studios, concert venues, movie theaters, and hotels to integrate cannabis into their offerings as long as it is through an equity applicant. This will allow equity applicants to approach existing businesses in Cambridge who may be willing to add cannabis. But requiring an HCA for each of these businesses would overwhelm City staff and make the process unworkable. I suggest embracing the new license types and making way for them by eliminating requirements that may be required for other license types.

For context, I sat on the Cannabis Advisory Board in 2017 and helped develop the social consumption framework which has been included in the Commission's new proposal including the hospitality license type. I'm happy to share insights on the new regulations if that would be helpful to the City.

6. Medical Marijuana Patient Access

Finally, I want to address the lack of medical marijuana access for Cambridge residents. Right now, registered medical patients have no access to medicine in their own city.

- Revolutionary Clinics has now closed.
- Commonwealth Alternative Care is closed for renovations.

This leaves patients with no local options to obtain the medicine they need.

We ask the City to support equity retailers like us by advocating for:

1. Waivers from vertical integration requirements.
2. Relief from the large licensing fees that block access.



This would allow equity businesses, like ours, to serve medical patients efficiently and equitably here in Cambridge.

Thank you for your time and for considering these proposals. I look forward to working with the City to ensure Cambridge continues to support its equity entrepreneurs, patients, and consumers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Latulippe', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Latulippe, Partner at Blue River Terps