

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL  
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE  
Monday, March 30 2026**

**ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Councillor McGovern, Co-Chair  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, Co-Chair  
Councillor Al-Zubi  
Vice Mayor Azeem  
Councillor Flaherty  
Councillor Nolan  
Councillor Simmons  
Councillor Zusy  
Mayor Siddiqui

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Ordinance Committee was held on Monday, March 30, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:00 a.m. by the Co-Chair, Sobrinho-Wheeler. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

**At the request of the Co-Chair, Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Al-Zubi – Present/Remote  
Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent  
Councillor Flaherty – Absent  
Councillor McGovern – Present/Remote  
Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Councillor Simmons – Absent\*  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Councillor Zusy – Absent\*  
Mayor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

**Present – 5, Absent – 4**

\*Councillor Zusy was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 11:03a.m.

\*Councillor Simmons was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 11:18a.m.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to review the Community Benefits Ordinance and discuss potential updates including allowing the allocation of funding to community organizations for capital projects. Present at the meeting was Chief of Administration and Operations for Community Development, Sandra Clarkee, Assistant Director of Adult and Family Services for Human Services, Sue Walsh, Budget Director, Taha Jennings, City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, and Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Melissa Peters.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Sandra Clarkee and Sue Walsh who gave a presentation related to Community Benefits. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Nolan who asked for additional information regarding the outreach that was done related to the proposed amendments and highlighted the importance of engaging stakeholders, as well as maintaining a balance between citywide and neighborhood needs. Sandra Clarke provided a brief overview of past engagement efforts and explained that the current amendments relied more on input from the Advisory Committee and nonprofit representatives rather than community outreach. Councillor Nolan emphasized the importance of community engagement and noted that there should be a more inclusive and collaborative process moving forward.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Mayor Siddiqui who expressed strong support for the proposed amendments and spoke in favor of expanding allowable uses to include capital expenses. Mayor Siddiqui asked if there was a timeline for distributing the remaining funds, noting the ongoing challenges nonprofit organizations are facing. Sandra Clarke responded that the Committee is in the process of developing a timeline, with the goal of having a stronger plan by the summer months, she emphasized that the Committee is focused on creating a sustainable process. Mayor Siddiqui urged the Committee to consider distributing the funds sooner given the urgency of nonprofit needs.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Zusy who asked for clarification regarding the 17 guiding principles and raised questions about how the Community Benefits Fund relates to other types of community benefits, such as open space, and other projects that support the community. Councillor Zusy offered comments related to the importance of understanding how these decisions are made and how priorities are balanced when working with developers, and what role the City has in those conversations. Councillor Zusy emphasized the need to balance nonprofit funding with broader community needs and acknowledged that there are many competing priorities across the City, such as housing. Councillor Zusy expressed support for the proposed amendments. Melissa Peters explained that Community Benefits funding comes from voluntary developer contributions tied to zoning agreements and clarified that while the City cannot require contributions, the fund is a preferred option when working with developers.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler expressed support for allowing funds to be used for capital expenses and asked whether the proposed changes would allow for the purchase of property. Megan Bayer responded that it would most likely be allowed. Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler also raised concerns about the amount of funding currently available and noted that the City should work toward establishing a more consistent and sustainable funding source in the future. Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler suggested that the City explore a more structured approach moving forward. Staff emphasized that increasing awareness among developers is an important step in encouraging more contributions.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Simmons who asked if there is a requirement within the Ordinance for a regular review process and suggested that a formal review process every three to five years could help ensure the program remains effective and equitable.

Councillor Simmons added that the original intent of the Ordinance was to address gaps across neighborhoods within the City. Councillor Simmons expressed support for the proposed amendments. Sandra Clarke noted that the Committee has produced reports following the different funding cycles, but there is currently no formal review requirement included in the Ordinance.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Al-Zubi who asked whether the City could advance funding based on pledged future contributions in order to provide support to nonprofit organizations now. City Solicitor Megan Bayer explained that the City would not be legally permitted to advance the funding because the funds come from private contributors and are not guaranteed.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Co-Chair McGovern, who raised concerns about potential confusion surrounding the term “community benefits.” Co-Chair McGovern noted that the term can refer to both community-related projects, such as sidewalks and parks, as well as funding for nonprofit organizations. He suggested that providing a clearer definition would improve transparency and help distinguish between these uses. Co-Chair McGovern also suggested that the Committee consider more consistent and predictable approaches to allocating funds moving forward.

Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler summarized the comments and concerns raised during the discussion and shared that the next step would be to forward the proposed amendments to the full City Council.

**Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Mayor Siddiqui who made a motion to forward the proposed amendments to the Community Benefits fund to the full City Council with a favorable recommendation.**

**Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent

Councillor Flaherty – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan - Yes

Councillor Simmons – Absent

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Mayor Siddiqui – Yes

**Yes – 6, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed**

**Co-Chair Sobrinho-Wheeler recognized Councillor Simmons who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent

Councillor Flaherty – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Yes  
Councillor Nolan  
Councillor Simmons – Absent  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes  
Councillor Zusy – Yes  
Mayor Siddiqui – Yes  
**Yes – 6, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed**

**Clerk’s Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:  
[Mar 30, 2026 Ordinance Committee - Cambridge, MA](#)

In City Council April 27, 2026.  
Adopted by a ye and nay vote:-  
Yeas 7; Nays 0; Absent 2.-  
Attest:- Paula M. Crane, Interim City Clerk  
A true copy;



ATTEST:-

Paula M. Crane  
Interim City Clerk