



FINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, December 15, 2022

11:00 AM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Finance Committee will conduct a public meeting to discuss the City Council’s budget priorities and to discuss how to incorporate those priorities into the FY24 budget ahead of the FY24 budget cycle

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Dennis J. Carlone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11:15 AM
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11:43 AM
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11:04 AM

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Finance Committee was held on Thursday, December 15, 2022. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:00 a.m. by the Chair, Councillor Carlone. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, 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.

City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote

Councillor Carlone - Present

Vice Mayor Mallon – Present

Councillor McGovern – Present/Remote

Councillor Nolan – Present

Councillor Simmons – Absent*

Councillor Toner – Present

Councillor Zondervan – Absent*

Mayor Siddiqui – Absent*

Present – 8, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

*Councillor Zondervan was marked present at 11:04a.m.

*Councillor Simmons was marked present at 11:43a.m.

*Mayor Siddiqui was marked present at 11:15a.m.

Councillor Carlone began opening remarks and noted that the meeting today was to discuss the City Council’s budget priorities and to discuss how to incorporate those priorities into the FY24 budget ahead of the FY24 budget cycle. Also present at the meeting were City Manager Yi-An

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 15, 2022 11:00 AM (Committee Reports)

Huang, accompanied by his team Taha Jennings, Budget Director, and David Kale, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs. The City Manager began the meeting with opening remarks about the FY24 budget, noting that he was very excited about working with City staff for the future budget discussions.

Councillor Nolan did an overview of what the City Council budget priorities are, which included Youth, Housing, Climate, City Operations/Infrastructure, Transportation, Open Space, Public Safety, and Resident Services. (ATTACHMENT A)

Public Comment

Gretchen Friesinger, 18 Orchard Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the Urban Forestry Master Plan funding.

Catherine LeBlanc, 14 Tufts Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on the budget for the Urban Forestry Plan and suggested Forestry be its own department. (ATTACHMENT E)

Allan Sadun, 237 Elm Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on the FY24 budget priorities and affordable housing needs.

John Hawkinson, read from a written communication (ATTACHMENT D) and spoke on free cash.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on maintaining trees and irrigation systems, noting that trees are important for physical, social, and mental health.

Lee Farris, 269 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on the FY24 budget, including universal PreK, climate goals, benchmark for expenditures, and street and park trees.

A motion was made by The Chair, Councillor Carlone to close public comment.

City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Carlone – Yes

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – No

Mayor Siddiqui – Yes

Yes – 8, No – 1. Motion passes.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Toner who commented on free cash and for the approval of purchases with the budget ahead of time.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Zondervan who spoke on his budget priorities, which included affordable housing, HEART program, shelter capacities, afterschool time, universal PreK, protecting the existing tree canopy, and cannabis revenue.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Simmons who noted that funding should be concise and continue training for staff. Councillor Simmons also noted that there should be

fair treatment for tenants, and that the Moore and Moses Youth Centers both need to be updated for the Cambridge youth.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor McGovern who had clarifying questions about the FY24 budget and if there were any ideas already in play. David Kale was able to provide answers, suggesting that the City Council come up with a list of individual items. Councillor McGovern noted that the most basic need is having a roof over your head and agreed with fellow Council members with the budget going towards affordable housing, municipal broadband, and preschool and afterschool programs.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Mayor Siddiqui who reiterated the importance of benchmarking. The Mayor suggested that the City be more innovative with their budgeting, allow more housing and homeownership opportunities, and to look at ways where it could be easier to build more affordable housing. Mayor Siddiqui also noted that she was open to the idea of having a full year component of the Mayor's Program for Cambridge youth instead of just offering a summertime program.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who suggested that the City Council put together a full list of members ideas and thoughts about the FY24 budget and that the City Council should be making more decisions together as a whole. The Vice Mayor also noted that it was ok for the City to fail and make mistakes, failing and making mistake would only help the City grow to be better.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Azeem who noted that he agreed with other City Council members comments on the budget and noted the importance of the City Manager's Office to support the City Council before, during, and after the legislative process.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Nolan who commented that it is important for the City to make smart goals to help prioritize the budget and to be successful. She also commented on the climate crisis and ways the budget could go towards helping it. She suggested the City look in to hiring internal staff for projects instead of using outside consultants to help achieve goals.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone noted that the City should use the funds in an intelligent way, and spoke on energy and resilience goals, community engagement, open space, and universal PreK, noting that universal PreK should start as early as two years old to help benefit children.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Toner who had clarifying questions on the budget, asking if the Council were able to see a dollar amount to help prioritize where the budget will be going and what category it would be going towards. The City Manager was able to respond noting that there is a process for prioritizing, and that the City would need a sense on where the Council is on budget categories, goals, and strategy.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Zondervan who suggested the Council give the City Manager their priorities and for the City Manager to be able to respond back with a plan.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor McGovern who suggested that the City Council look at the School Committee budget guidelines because they could be helpful.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Vice Mayor Mallon suggested that the Finance Committee Co-Chairs possibly meet with the City Manager and his finance team to discuss budget priorities and to better organize budget categories.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Mayor Siddiqui who asked for more clarity on the American Rescue Plan Funding (ARPA). The Mayor noted that the City should also be looking at tools to think about how the City could be more efficient about going forward with smart goals.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone commented that there is a group that presented at the National League of Cities that evaluates programs department by department which has been successful and could be a program that Cambridge possibly looks in to.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan followed up on some of the City Managers comments concerning the appropriation process, noting that it would help the Committee get some clarity and guidance from the City Manager and administration side when it comes to funding and priorities.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Councillor Azeem who noted that financial and fiscal responsibility is very important and looks to see a different budget then what has come out in the past.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone commented on the national inflation rates and how administration will work with the rising inflation changes.

The Chair, Councillor Carlone recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who made a motion to adjourn.

City Clerk LeBlanc called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Carlone – Yes

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – No

Mayor Siddiqui – Yes

Yes – 9, No – 0. Adjournment at 12:58p.m.

Attachment A: Council Budget Priorities: (categorized).

The City Clerk's Office received one written communication, Attachments B – E.

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/380?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=f3edb0d245d9e3ef39dff06c33a3f99d

All meetings are “closed captioned”. After each meeting the “closed captioned transcripts” are available online at: <https://app.box.com/s/9qormcahynjt4pzpt1n5opixogl3q7k5>
Please note that there is no editing of these “closed captioned transcripts” and they do not constitute a verbatim transcript prepared by a certified transcriber.

A communication was received from Councillor Nolan, transmitting Categorized Council Budget Priorities.

Attachment A

Council Budget Priorities: (categorized)

[prepared by Finance Co-Chairs in prep for meeting Dec. 15, 2022]

YOUTH

- Universal pre-K expansion - in partnership with CPS, with city retaining control
- Afterschool for all who want to enroll including social and academic programming as students need and : Expand capacity at Community Schools, implement the King Open Extended Day program model at an additional site, and expand weekend youth center programming
- Full year employment opportunities for MYSEP

HOUSING

- Programs to support people in affordable housing rentals to move to home ownership
- Increase affordable housing funding, consider dedicating 10% of the city's budget to the Affordable Housing Trust.
- Address homelessness and increase shelter beds to pre-Covid levels
- Home ownership opportunities
- Affordable Housing: allocate more tax revenue for affordable housing, including through the \$500 million housing bond proposal.
- Non-congregate shelter capacity: commit tax revenue to expand ; partner with MIT to renovate 240 Albany Street, creating a day shelter and adding non congregate transitional housing
- Eliminate building fees for Affordable Housing projects.

CLIMATE

- Fund climate crisis efforts at level appropriate to emergency, in partnership with non city sources
- Supplement MassSave incentives for heat pumps, aimed at low and moderate income households. \$3 million would provide \$15K each for 200 households
- Conduct feasibility study in two areas of Cambridge for networked geothermal: \$1.4 million total
- Fund incentives for landlords to do energy efficiency measures: provide financial incentive for insulation and building sealings, provide up to \$2,000 per unit beyond any MassSave incentives
- Provide subsidies for e-bikes for any resident who does not own a car
- Hire enough staff to provide technical assistance for BEUDO building owners

CITY OPERATIONS/INFRASTRUCTURE

- Municipal broadband
- Ensure city has research capacity responsible for independent research on inputs and impacts of policy proposals/changes including promised economic impact studies

- Capital plan to address non-renovated school buildings including playgrounds with a focus on equity in allocation and timing
- Increased funding for rat mitigation with proven, as well as innovative strategies, for controlling the rat population
- Funding to expand City departments as needed (CDD, ISD, Housing, DPW, TPT)
- Study what a living wage is and raise city salaries so all employees can live in Cambridge
- Address infrastructure needs in the Port area, including youth center, parks, crosswalks

TRANSPORTATION

- Pilot a low cost rideshare shuttle service to increase access to transportation for residents, especially seniors
- City to provide funds to purchase EV buses/Shuttles to provide more free transportation options within the city. Specific routes to consider - Mass Ave from North Cambridge to Harvard, Mass Ave Harvard to MIT/Charles River, Cambridge Street Harvard to Lechmere, Broadway Harvard to Kendall.
- City Purchase E Bikes and create a city operated delivery service to provide a no cost or low-cost delivery service to support our restaurants and small business to provide in city delivery
- Blue bikes expansion as needed - for construction and acquisition of new stations and additions of ebikes.
- Ensure adequate funding for enforcement of traffic regulations

OPEN SPACE

- Seek opportunities for land purchase
- Increasing funding for activation of public spaces and streets, like playstreets, and other place making and community gathering efforts, with additional FTEs if necessary
- Expand tree canopy and fund current plans
- Danehy park improvements including recovering from tree loss
- Plan for street closures in our squares and add food options along memorial drive

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Funding for reduction of gun violence, including support for programs that target our opportunity youth, and returning residents
- HEART Program: Establish ongoing funding mechanism for HEART
- Reallocate funds within police budget to other public safety measures

RESIDENT SERVICES

- Increase the summer food budget to attract new vendors who can increase the quality of the food, creating more culturally appropriate options, expanding locations etc.

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment B

From: Kelly Dolan <kelly.dolan.kd@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 14, 2022 4:33 PM
To: City Manager; City Clerk; Patricia Nolan; Carlone, Dennis; Simmons, Denise; Zondervan, Quinton; Toner, Paul; Siddiqui, Sumbul; McGovern, Marc; Mallon, Alanna; Azeem, Burhan
Cc: Lefcourt, David; O'Riordan, Owen; Webster, David; Putnam, Andrew
Subject: Priorities for the Finance Committee 2024 Budget

We are writing to strongly urge the Finance Committee and the City Manager to commit more funding and city support in the FY2024 budget to protect and defend our tree infrastructure which is a vital but endangered community asset.

In addition to the resiliency benefits trees provide by sequestering carbon and protecting against erosion and flooding, the recent Open Space Planning study illustrated the direct impact our natural environment has on the well being of our residents, and highlighted how our tree infrastructure is currently unequally distributed across the city.

According to the recent reports provided below, open space, including streets and sidewalks accounts for 44.4%, almost half of our entire land use in Cambridge. Yet we as a community focus more money and investment on the remaining 55.6% that comprises our built environment. What is clear from the surveys recently done for Open Space, Linear Park, Affordable Housing residents and every single Participatory Budget process is that Cambridge residents value and cherish our trees and our access to nature and want the City of Cambridge to make our tree infrastructure more of a priority.

The Open Space Planning project reported that 27% of our residents said its "not easy to get to nature" or to "community gardens", while 90% of residents said they could easily get to playgrounds or gathering places. And when you look at the city's Resilience Map for tree canopy and heat island protection it shows an extremely unequal distribution of these resources across the city.

During the recent CC Round Table city officials made it clear the difficulty in fulfilling the competing interests of a growing community. We hear those conflicts when discussing housing or commercial needs. But the demands of a growing built environment shouldn't take precedence over protecting our vital tree assets across 44% of existing land in our community. Investing wisely in tree infrastructure to increase our endangered canopy is complementary to all of our shared goals and values for open space, equity, environmental resiliency and resident health and well being.

We have laid the groundwork and roadmaps to address this pressing issue through the Urban Forest Master Plan, our Tree Protection Ordinance and the new Urban Forestry Team. But we have fallen behind in many of their proposed implementations, including securing an updated report on the condition of the tree canopy and the creation of a reserve fund for tree related disasters. The new City Manager should challenge the barriers that are preventing us from reaching these goals, hold those administrators accountable and ensure that enough funding is secured to adequately and urgently protect and increase this vital community asset.

We look forward to seeing a renewed investment and commitment to our tree infrastructure when the 2024 budget is presented to the City Council.

Sincerely

Kelly Dolan
 Gregory Berndt AIA
 Upland Road

Overview -CDD does Open Space Planning- DHSP recreational planning, DPW maintenance and operation.

[https://www.cambridgema.gov/-](https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ParksandOpenSpace/OSPlanning/OpenSpacePlanning2021/OpenSpacePlanning_Meeting04_FINAL.pdf)

[/media/Files/CDD/ParksandOpenSpace/OSPlanning/OpenSpacePlanning2021/OpenSpacePlanning_Meeting04_FINAL.pdf](https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ParksandOpenSpace/OSPlanning/OpenSpacePlanning2021/OpenSpacePlanning_Meeting04_FINAL.pdf)

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Resilience Map

[https://www.cambridgema.gov/-](https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ParksandOpenSpace/OSPlanning/OpenSpacePlanning2021/OpenSpacePlanning_Meeting01_FINAL.pdf)

[/media/Files/CDD/ParksandOpenSpace/OSPlanning/OpenSpacePlanning2021/OpenSpacePlanning_Meeting01_FINAL.pdf](https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ParksandOpenSpace/OSPlanning/OpenSpacePlanning2021/OpenSpacePlanning_Meeting01_FINAL.pdf)

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Urban Forest Plan 2015-2034

<https://www.cambridge.ca/en/learn-about/resources/Accessible-PDFs/Cambridge-Urban-Forest-Plan-2015-2034.pdf>

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment C

From: Upgrade Cambridge <roy@upgradecambridge.org>
Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2022 9:04 AM
To: Carlone, Dennis; Nolan, Patricia
Cc: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: FY 24 Budget Priorities

Dec 14, 2022

Chairs Carlone and Nolan, members of the Finance Committee
 Re: FY 24 Budget Priorities

Given the robust public support for municipal broadband which was described recently at the 21st Century Broadband Roundtable (November 28, 2022 Agenda Packet page 9) and the recommendations for work needed to address digital equity in the Digital Equity Study published March 2021 we at Upgrade Cambridge would like to see these efforts fully funded next year.

It's time for the City, both the Council and the administration to get serious about broadband.

1. Transparency and trust. Councilors who were serving at the time will remember how difficult it was to get even the simplest information from the previous administration. The launch of new broadband initiatives provides an opportunity to do things differently, to provide detailed information on an area of clear interest to the majority of Cantibrigians.
2. Digital equity. Fifteen years ago, Cambridge was among the leaders in digital equity with its pioneering work to bring wifi to Newtown Court. Eighteen months ago, Cambridge received an excellent report outlining a plan of action to address digital equity. The FY24 budget should fully fund a digital equity plan. And let's be clear. Digital equity is racial and economic equity. If Cambridge's goal is an equitable city, it cannot achieve it without forthrightly attacking this inequity created by the pricing and policies of our monopoly broadband provider.
3. Municipal broadband. The City will soon receive the 21st Century Broadband study which will present the City with decisions it needs to make if it is to pursue a city-owned broadband system. The process of moving forward can't be done with the spare time of City staff. The FY24 budget should provide funding for staff, consultants, training, and outreach for a robust, inclusive process, one the brings the City together to achieve this necessary and widely supported goal.

Upgrade Cambridge

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 15, 2022 11:00 AM (Committee Reports)

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment D

From: John Hawkinson <jhawk@alum.mit.edu>
Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2022 7:30 AM
To: City Council
Cc: Huang, Yi-An; Kale, David; Jennings, Taha; City Clerk
Subject: A Shadow Budget -- free cash + bonding planning we never see
Attachments: 2022.12.15.hawkinson.shadowbudget.pdf

Councillors: I'm worried more and more about the fact that the city has a plan (I call it the Shadow Budget) for how to spend free cash and what projects to bond, and that is a plan the Council never sees, and only approves the items from it week-by-week without ever seeing the big picture.

Please see the attached letter, intended for this morning's Finance Committee meeting. I'll read from it there if it seems appropriate.

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jhawk@alum.mit.edu
 John Hawkinson

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Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 15, 2022 11:00 AM (Committee Reports)

John A. Hawkinson, freelance news reporter
 Box 397103
 Cambridge, MA 02139-7103
 617-797-0250, jhawk@alum.MIT.EDU

December 15, 2022

Finance Committee
 Patty Nolan and Dennis Carlone, Chairs
 795 Massachusetts Avenue
 Cambridge, MA 02139
By electronic mail: council@cambridgema.gov

Re: Shadow Budget for free cash planning

Dear Councillors:

I write to emphasize a budgetary planning concern that has grown on my mind in recent years: the City Council carefully approves a plan to spend \$800 million a year, which we call the "budget." But that "budget" includes no clear planning for how the City will spend \$70 to 100 million of the available \$200 million in free cash, nor of what bonds it may issue. There is a Shadow Budget (my term) where the Manager plans the use of those funds, but you and I do not see it.

Most people would call a "budget" a plan for how to spend all the money we are going to spend, but in Cambridge municipal finance, the "budget" is strangely myopic, ignoring, for the most part, planned free cash expenditures. As the Budget Book says, "Potential Free Cash expenditures which are not necessarily reflected in the budget, are also not included."

The City Administration has a multi-year plan¹ for that free cash — the Shadow Budget — whose available balance is one quarter of the thing we call a "budget." And that understates its importance in planning, because the "budget" includes hundreds of millions of dollars that are not reasonably discretionary — salaries have to be paid; services have to be funded; the School Committee carefully stewards its portion. The Council and the Manager can and do make adjustments around the margins, but any major changes

¹ As I understand it, the City's position is any planning for future free cash expenditures is exempt from public disclosure under the "deliberative process exemption," meant to allow staff to freely express thoughts during a decisionmaking process. To prevent them from carefully not writing things down to avoid public disclosure.

are hard. But free cash expenditures are far more discretionary, and their approvals are surgical and individual. No need to vote down an entire department's budget to send a message.

Instead of seeing that Shadow Budget — the plan for free cash — the Manager brings to you individual appropriations out of free cash every few weeks, often a million dollars or more each. Those appropriation request never say how much is left in free cash, and they rarely, if ever, say what other expenses are predicted. The Council approves each one on its own merits, and does not look at the big picture.

How many years running has the Manager brought you a million dollar appropriation for public safety radios (it was \$0.7M in FY22, and \$1.3M in FY21)? Or park renovations (\$11M in FY22, \$0.9M in FY21, \$13M in FY20)? Or countless other things? How do those appropriations stack up year over year? Each individual expenditure is surely meritorious, but who is looking at the big picture?

Where is the plan for those expenditures? What any normal person would call: the budget?

Please ask the Manager how you can responsibly approve free cash expenditures, as well as bond authorizations, without knowing these things. Please adopt a process that allows you to plan for them. Please ask the right questions each week when you approve a few million dollars here, a few million there, and that adds up to \$100 million in a year (it was \$67M in FY22, \$76M in FY21, \$100M in FY20, and \$46M in FY19).

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

/s/ John A. Hawkinson

John A. Hawkinson

cc: City Manager, Ass't City Manager for Finance, Budget Director, City Clerk

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment E

From: City Clerk
Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2022 2:22 PM
To: Erwin, Nicole
Subject: FW: Public Comment Finance Committee Mtg. Dec. 15

From: Catherine LeBlanc <catherineleblanc693@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2022 11:43 AM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@Cambridgema.gov>; City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; City Manager <CityManager@CambridgeMA.GOV>
Subject: Public Comment Finance Committee Mtg. Dec. 15

As MA average temperatures have exceeded the 1'C global temp warning,
 As current atmospheric carbon dioxide is 390 parts per million,
 As Cambridge experienced critical drought this year,
 It is prudent to fully fund the only infrastructure that draws down carbon, sequesters and stores it. Additionally, these systems purify the city air and water, mitigate flooding & soil erosion, provide needed cooling effect, supports hundreds of species for biodiversity, lowers crime rates, blood pressure & increases sense of well being throughout the city.

The City requested residents water & weed during the recent critical level drought. We all failed to provide adequate response and lost vital infrastructure from that impact alone. We cannot afford more losses.

As the City Manager is present, I request reorganization for Forestry to be it's own department. It's reasonable for this critical infrastructure.

I request full funding & implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan, for the Urban Forestry department and the Tree Ordinance.

I am excited for a more robust, thriving urban forestry infrastructure.
 Thank you.
 Catherine LeBlanc
 14 Tufts Street #3
 Cambridgeport

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Dec 15, 2022 11:00 AM (Committee Reports)