



HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Human Service and Veterans Committee will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, May 1, 2024 from 3:00p.m.-5:00p.m. to discuss the progress being made to bring universal afterschool to Cambridge. Public Comment will be allowed.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<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"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Human Services and Veterans Committee was held on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Wilson. 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 Co-Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

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

Present – 5. Quorum established.

Co-Chair Wilson offered opening remarks and shared that the Call of the meeting was to discuss the progress being made to bring universal afterschool to Cambridge. Present at the meeting from the Department of Human Services Department (DHSP) was Assistant City Manager, Ellen Semonoff, Assistant Director of Child, Youth, Family Services, Michelle Farnum, Education Liaison for the Office of the Mayor, Carolyn Turk, Strategy Manager, Nic Miragliuolo, Communications Manager, Bridget Martin, Coordinator/Supervisor of Activities Agenda, Susan Richards, Senior Account Clerk, Katie Urquhart, and Division Head, Melissa Bolden.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Co-Chair McGovern who offered opening remarks and highlighted the importance of being able to offer affordable afterschool to families in Cambridge and shared he looks forward to the conversation.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Michelle Farnum who gave a presentation titled “Afterschool Update”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview of an update on the progress and challenges from this year and the vision for future years, a review of the expansion of afterschool care, operating challenges, expanded school day and universal pre-k, goals on how to adapt to changes, and expansion of programs in North Cambridge. Committee members were recognized throughout the presentation for clarifying questions.

Co-Chair Wilson opened Public Comment.

C.A. Webb, 80 Tremont Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments of support for afterschool and shared challenges their family has faced with getting children enrolled.

Rachel Grashow, 107 Rindge Avenue, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on how the City and families can communicate to reach the same goal of universal afterschool.

Emie Michaud Weinstock, Cambridge, MA, offered questions for the Committee to consider as the City moves forward with the goal of universal afterschool.

Ashley Miller, 607 Green Street, Cambridge, MA, urged the City to provide more information on afterschool availability and costs.

Co-Chair Wilson closed Public Comment on a voice vote of all members in favor.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Co-Chair McGovern who asked DHSP to share the current challenges with maintaining staff and how it is to be addressed. Michelle Farnum explained that this is not an issue just in Cambridge. After the pandemic there have been many problems within the job market. Michelle Farnum explained why finding staff may be difficult, noting that part-time work with no benefits could not be attractive to some people. Michelle Farnum shared the difficulties of stabilizing staff, adding more full-time staff, while also trying to grow to provide affordable afterschool across the City. Co-Chair McGovern asked for more information on operational funding to help move universal afterschool forward and how equity is a priority. Michelle Farnum highlighted that equity has been driving changes within the Department from the beginning and offered examples of how she and Ellen Semonoff have addressed issues in the past to promote change. Michelle Farnum also provided an overview of changes that were made to the programs during the pandemic and shared the many priorities within the Department and how funding plays a role in reaching those priorities.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who asked if DHSP could share more information on the expansion in North Cambridge. Michelle Farnum responded and shared that there have been conversations with the Principal at the Peabody School, with hopes to expand the program that is already there, both by adding additional space for students as well as promoting some part-time staff to full-time and noted that space to expand is a current challenge. Co-Chair Wilson asked what DHSP would need to successfully roll out the expansion in the Fall. Michelle Farnum shared that it would require additional space and additional staffing in a pretty

short time. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler offered the suggested of bringing more paraprofessionals into the programs to assist with staffing needs in addition to converting some part-time employees to full-time. Ellen Semonoff shared that there are many paraprofessionals from the schools in the DHSP programs, but that comes with challenges due to commitments that need to be met by them when the school day is out, like meetings or professional development. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler highlighted the different interventions the City Council can take to assist DHSP with their staffing.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Nolan who asked the team from DHSP how the City is assisting children with afterschool services if they do not attend Cambridge Public Schools (CPS). Michelle Farnum shared that students who do not attend CPS do have the opportunity to use the school buses as a way of transportation to an afterschool program. Councillor Nolan offered the suggestion of thinking more about trying to implement more programs within the schools like the King Open Extended Day to help make it more equitable so that all children have access to opportunities that are available. Ellen Semonoff shared that this suggestion and comment could relate more to the School Department and noted that for programs like this to be successful, families would need to send their children to their neighborhood school to eliminate the bus transportation challenges.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who offered similar comments regarding and extended day program and asked for more information on the timeline regarding the Broader Expansion Study with the Agenda For Children and their recommendations. Michelle Farnum shared that they are in the very beginning phases with the plans to bring a report forward early next year all while DHSP will continue to work with an internal plan as well going forward.

Co-Chair Wilson thanked DHSP for their time and shared that she appreciates the conversation and presentation. Co-Chair Wilson highlighted the importance of continuing the discussion of bringing the possibility of universal afterschool to life and continuing to expand programs when able to so that everyone has access to programs. Co-Chair Wilson agreed with comments made regarding the Extended Day Programs and bringing that model to other locations if possible. Co-Chair Wilson made note of the many challenges that DHSP and the City face while trying to grow and provide as many resources as possible to residents. Co-Chair Wilson thanked Ellen Semonoff and her staff for all their hard work.

Co-Chair Wilson made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:58p.m.

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 these meetings can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/741?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Nic Miragliuolo, Strategy Manager, transmitting a presentation regarding an Afterschool Update.