



GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, RULES & CLAIMS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, May 1, 2025

1:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Government Operations, Rules, and Claims Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss the 2025 City Manager's Annual Goals and Review Process.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1:03 PM
Catherine Zusy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Government Operations, Rules, and Claims Committee was held on Thursday, May 1, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 1:00 p.m. by the Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern. 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, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Toner – Absent*
- Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

*Councillor Toner was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 1:03p.m.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to hold a public hearing to discuss the 2025 City Manager’s Annual Goals and Review Process. Present at the meeting was City Manager, Yi-An Huang, Deputy City Manager, Owen O’Riordan, Chief of Equity and Inclusion, Deidre Brown, Chief People Officer, Raecia Catchings, City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, and Commissioner of Public Works, Kathy Watkins. Also present were Councillor Nolan, Councillor Siddiqui, and Councillor Wilson. In advance of the meeting, City Manager Huang provided a draft proposal for the 2025 City Manager Performance Review and Goals. The document was included in the Agenda Packet.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized City Manager Huang who provided a review of the City Manager Performance Review Process. Throughout the review, Committee members were recognized for comments. City Manager Huang outlined the review process, annual goals, mid-year check-in, and year end and self-assessment, while highlighting goal categories, such as leadership and Council relationship. City Manager Huang pointed out that it would be good to work towards differentiating Council led efforts versus Administration led efforts when setting goals. Additionally, the City Manager provided an update on new initiatives, such as the compensation study, budget evaluation, engagement methods, and capital planning.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Siddiqui who emphasized the importance of having specificity in goals, especially for Universal Pre-K and Boards and Commissions. Additionally, Councillor Siddiqui suggested better clarity on the Strategy team's role within the City Manager's Office. City Manager Huang shared that there is internal work underway related to goals and agreed that more clarity and public discussion are needed. City Manager Huang suggested that projects might be better tracked through reports done through the Strategy team.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who offered comments related to reviewing operations and developing a plan to assess and evaluate City departments efficiency. Councillor Nolan pointed out that there should be more information on the leadership section for the City Manager and encouraged the City Manager to take a more proactive leadership role. Councillor Nolan agreed with Councillor Siddiqui on having more discussions related to Boards and Commissions. Councillor Nolan stressed the importance of moving away from paper-based systems. The City Manager noted that leadership goals are hard to define and welcomed the idea of breaking them down further and confirmed that modernizing paper-based systems is ongoing work.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who stressed how important it is to break down leadership areas in important topics such as housing, Human Services, and afterschool programs to be effective and best support the needs of the community. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler agreed with Councillor Nolan that the leadership category in the City Manager's Goals is too general, as well as creating measurable goals to track progress. City Manager Huang offered the suggestion of developing strategic road maps for topics such as housing and homelessness, which could help make it a more cohesive process between Administration, the City Council, and the community.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who shared concerns about evaluating the City Manager on housing issues alone due to the economic restraints. Councillor Wilson stressed the importance of evaluating existing programs, such as job training and summer camps.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Toner who offered the suggestion of conducting an audit of Ordinances and policies to be reviewed and evaluated. Councillor Toner provided an overview of past City Manager evaluations, noting that the process seems to be efficient. The City Manager agreed that there needs to be a better tracking system, especially with long-term commitments and expressed openness to include an audit.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Azeem who shared concerns about the American Freedman Commission being aligned as a measurable key goal. Councillor Azeem noted the importance of focusing on fiscal management, and that there is an opportunity for budget reconstruction due to current fiscal conditions. In addition, Councillor Azeem stressed that it is important to reassess past spending priorities and look at higher-priority needs. City Manager Huang acknowledged the budget constraints are increasing due to uncertainty at the State and Federal levels as well as rising costs, such as union contracts and health benefits. The City Manager agreed that there should be an evaluation of existing programs.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who offered comments related to long-term planning and public engagement. Councillor Zusy stressed how deferred maintenance becomes more expensive over time and that long-term infrastructure plans would make better budgeting decisions. Councillor Zusy stressed the importance of beginning community outreach and engagement with new programs and decisions as soon as possible, which would help with efforts to receive feedback and more community involvement. City Manager Huang provided a brief review of the framework on capital plans and had previously discussed in Committee that he would be interested in piloting new public meeting formats to achieve more diverse participation.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern reviewed and summarized what the next steps would be and stressed how important it is for Councillors to send feedback to the City Manager to incorporate the feedback into a revised document. The Vice Mayor pointed out that some categories should not be on the City

Manager's goal document but are still important and could be followed through using other mechanisms, such as Policy Orders. City Manager Huang shared that he is open to feedback from the City Council and bringing the revised document back to a full City Council meeting.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Yes – 5. 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:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1012?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from City Manager Yi-An Huang, transmitting a draft proposal for the 2024 City Manager Performance Review Process and Goals.