



# FINANCE COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, October 31, 2023

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Finance Committee will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 31, 2023 from 12:00p.m. – 2:00p.m. to discuss two status updates: Participatory Budgeting and on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in Cambridge.

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:34 PM
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### I. Call to Order

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Finance Committee was held on Tuesday, October 31, 2023. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Nolan. 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.**

- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Councillor Carlone – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Vice Mayor Mallon – Absent
- Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Simmons – Absent\*
- Councillor Toner – Absent
- Councillor Zondervan – Present/Remote
- Mayor Siddiqui – Present/Remote\*

**Present – 6, Absent – 3. Quorum established.**

**\*Councillor Simmons was marked present and remote at 12:34p.m.**

**\*Mayor Siddiqui went from remote participation to in person participation at 12:15p.m.**

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Oct 31, 2023 12:00 PM (Committee Reports)

The Chair, Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks and noted that the call of the meeting was to discuss two status updates, Participatory Budgeting and on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in Cambridge. Present at the meeting was City Manager Huang, Taha Jennings, Budget Director, Michele Kincaid, Acting Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, Jackson Price, Principal Budget Analyst and Participatory Budget Manager, Daniel Liss, Principal Budget Analyst, Matthew Nelson, Director of Administration and Operations, Betty Lyons, Federal Grant Consultant, Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Development, Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor, and Evan Bjorklund, Assistant City Solicitor. Joining the meeting via Zoom were Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, and Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD).

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Jackson Price and Daniel Liss who gave a presentation titled “Participatory Budgeting” which was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview of what Participatory Budgeting (PB) is and how it works, a review of the proposal development process and what the money can be used for, speed consulting with City staff, when the next PB voting will take place, and PB funding and the new budget.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Zondervan, who asked a question about including non-capital projects in the PB process and utilizing PB for more pilot projects. The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor McGovern, who asked about tracking the work of ongoing projects and keeping the public apprised of ongoing and completed projects. The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Co-Chair Carlone for comments. Councillors thanked the PB team for their work and shared their excitement for past and future projects that are a result of the efforts and dedication from the PB team and their delegates. Councillor Nolan asked for clarification on concerns that were raised by residents and participants of past PB volunteers regarding the participatory budget process, specifically the delegate process and whether confidentiality is a requirement. Councillor Nolan also asked about the process for project-vetting, including the public comment period. The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Simmons, who asked a question about demographic data for project submission and voters. Jackson Price and Daniel Liss were available to respond and provide a detailed response to all the questions and concerns that were raised in the discussion.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Matthew Nelson and Michele Kincaid who gave a presentation titled “American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Cambridge Update”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview of ARPA and how it works with grantees, and a status update on the ARPA funds with a complete list of committed projects, noting that most of the City’s ARPA commitments are aimed at community-based initiatives, and what the goals and next steps are moving forward. Matthew Nelson thanked the City staff who have played a key role in the ARPA funding and projects.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Co-Chair Carlone for comments and questions. Councillor Carlone noted the complexity of working with ARPA funds and asked for a more detailed review of the prioritized projects graph and which funds have been dispersed. Matthew

Nelson was available to respond and review the graph on Agenda Packet page 34 with the Committee. City Manager Huang provided additional information relative to the graph and shared that it is the most accurate way to understand the challenges and the process that the ARPA funding needs to go through with the committed projects.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor McGovern who asked for information on what happens when the money runs out and what would happen with the programs that are funded by it. City Manager Huang shared that the focus right now is to try to make sure all the funds are being used with a plan on having conversations about what happens after as it gets closer to the end of 2024. The City Manager has stressed to recipients that ARPA funding is limited and shared that he would like to have a conversation with the Council at a later date to prioritize future funding of programs.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Mayor Siddiqui who asked when recipients would have to spend the funding by. Michele Kincaid shared that they would have to incur the cost by December 2024 and provided a review of what the audit team must process with the grant funding. Mayor Siddiqui had a follow up question regarding a square within a square and are there any updates the City could provide. City Manager Huang was available to respond and noted that there would be a more detailed update available at the City Council Roundtable meeting on November 13, 2023. The City Manager stressed the importance that the City reviews the proposal thoroughly to work out all the details in order to commit itself to making it work.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan had a follow up question regarding the auditing process and the chart that was referenced earlier in the conversation. Michele Kincaid was available to provide a response and a brief overview of how Cambridge works with grants and nonprofits and its relation to the audit process. The Chair, Councillor Nolan asked questions about providing detailed status updates for all projects as well as providing a more detailed chart for ongoing disbursements. City Manager Huang shared that he would like to see all the projects in the Chart moved to a completed category, but recognizes it takes time and effort, and noted the importance of making sure all the funds are being spent. Matthew Nelson was able to respond indicating that the status chart would be updated with much more detailed information. Councillor Nolan shared that the Committee looks forward to an updated Chart that is more specific to the 87 projects.

**The Chair, Councillor Nolan made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Carlone – Yes

Vice Mayor Mallon – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Zondervan – Yes

Mayor Siddiqui – Yes

**Yes – 6, No – 0, Absent – 3. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:47p.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 this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/608?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=f095bcbf51d7a07a76c2db76615692f9](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/608?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=f095bcbf51d7a07a76c2db76615692f9)

## II. Discussion

**A communication was received from Matt Nelson, Director of Administration and Operations, transmitting a presentation relative to ARPA.**

**A communication was received from Jackson Price, Principal Budget Analyst and Participatory Budget Manager transmitting a presentation relative to the Participatory Budget.**