



FINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, February 2, 2023

1:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Finance Committee will conduct a public meeting to discuss the FY24 Capital Budget, and future investment priorities in Cambridge's physical infrastructure ahead of the FY24 budget cycle

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Dennis J. Carbone	<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 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"/>	1:53 PM
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Finance Committee was held on Thursday, February 2, 2023. The meeting was Called to Order at 1:30 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, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Carbone – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote

Vice Mayor Malon – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Simmons – Absent*

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Zondervan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Mayor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

*Councillor Simmons was marked present and remote at 1:53p.m.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan noted that the call of the meeting was to discuss the FY24 Capital Budget, and future investment priorities in Cambridge's physical infrastructure ahead of the FY24 budget cycle.

Councillor Carbone shared that this is a beginning of a process that will only improve with time and looks forward to working with City Staff to make the process better for all involved.

Councillor Nolan introduced the City Manager, Yi-An Huang, who was joined with Deputy City Manager, Owen O'Riordan, and members from the Finance team, which included, David Kale, Assistant City Manager for Finance, and Taha Jennings, Budget Director.

City Manager Huang offered comments about the FY24 Capital Budget, noting that the conversation should focus on where the City is spending money, finding money, and making decisions on where and how to spend the money. He shared that he was excited to talk more about the process that happens throughout the year regarding Capital Budget and how the City will make decisions on which projects will get investments. He stressed an important factor with the budget is ensuring the City is running well and all the services the City provides is dependable. He concluded by sharing that this is only the beginning of conversation and looks forward to continuing it.

Taha Jennings, David Kale, and Deputy City Manager Owen O'Riordan gave a presentation titled, "City of Cambridge Capital Spending/Public Investment" (Attachment A). Taha Jennings noted the importance of showing the difference between the operating budget and capital budget and noted that projects can be large and require significant funding, which is why it is good to plan to prepare for future expenditures. Deputy City Manager Owen O'Riordan reviewed areas within the City where the Capital Budget could be used for multi-year capital projects and shared additional large projects that could be considered for future capital investment that the City would need to prioritize. David Kale gave an overview of the Capital Budget and Public Investment Fund and shared examples of previous Capital Budget projects, noting that the City has been able to find a balance between different City funds and evaluate how much debt is appropriate. The City Manager and his team made themselves available for any comments and questions.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan opened Public Comment.

Young Kim, 17 Norris Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on the FY24 Capital Budget and referenced his issues with the FY22 and FY23 budget and asked they be fixed with the FY24 budget. Mr. Kim also submitted a written communication in the Committee meeting.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of funding going towards more tree to support tree canopy in the City. She shared that trees help with climate resilience factor, mental health, and she offered many other examples to suggest they are an important infrastructure.

Councillor McGovern shared that he appreciates the increased funding towards affordable housing. He suggested that the City make a commitment of 10% of funding towards affordable housing. He shared that he and other members of the Council visted a Day Drop in Center in Boston that was built in one year, and stressed the importance of the City to put funding towards a Day Center. He shared that the budget reflects the City's values.

City Manager Huang shared that he was ready for a conversation on getting a Day Center in place. He noted that there was a long list of items the City Council wants to see on the Capital Budget, but it's important that critical services in infrastructure are considered and that they need to be maintained. He noted that the City has flexibility to look at projects to invest in and that he is open to a more inclusive conversation with the overall capacity of funding.

Councillor McGovern shared that it would be good for the City Council to have a better understanding of what flexibility they have when it comes to projects.

Vice Mayor Mallon had a clarifying question from the presentation regarding department capital requests and at what point in the process are department capital requests are first evaluated by the capital budget committee. Deputy City Manager O'Riordan commented that the committee is

internal within the City. A complete review is done and submitted to the City Manager. Once that is done, it then becomes part of budget proposal. Vice Mayor Mallon commented that the City Council would like to be more involved in more of the beginning of the process. City Manager Huang agreed that he is looking for alignment with the City Council to come together sooner and to communicate clearly with more transparency on status of projects.

Vice Mayor Mallon echoed comments made by Councillor McGovern regarding Day Centers and how the City has been in talks of doing one for many years. The Vice Mayor stressed the importance of the City explaining the budget numbers appropriately, and gave the example of the Tobin School. Noting that it's not just a school, she noted that it's helping to go towards planet change and climate change resiliency factors. The Vice Mayor had a clarifying question about the arts and culture in Central Square. Deputy City Manager O'Riordan noted that there will be a planning study done for Central Square and all the open parcels. The expectation is that the planning study will come and he explained what the needs are for the Central Square, as well as affordable housing and other items that have been identified.

Councillor Zondervan shared that it would be helpful if the City Council had a better understanding of the process. He had a follow up on comment and questions regarding the unhoused population and a day shelter and noted that funds should go towards affordable housing and the unhoused and to help create shelter beds and to be able to increase capacity. The City Manager offered a response, noting that working with the unhoused is continued work and he plans to report back when something is more final. He noted that funds for something related to his would come from the operating budget. Councillor Zondervan commented that he looks forward to the update and stressed the importance of recognizing that specific crisis. David Kale noted that with Mass State Law, there are only two vehicles for which the City can issue bonds for affordable housing, and referenced Chapters 44B and 121B. Councillor Zondervan suggested that the City explore other ways to find funding to reach goals.

Mayor Siddiqui had clarifying questions on playgrounds though out the City getting updated or remodeled and asked for clarification on what budget the funding would come from. She also questioned how playgrounds are prioritized. David Kale shared that the Peabody School allocation has already happened and the process is beginning, while Deputy City Manager O'Riordan noted that the internal Open Space Committee reviews what needs to be repaired in the City. Mayor Siddiqui offered comments on how it would be helpful in the future if the City can provide ways where the City Council could have more input in participating in the future. The City Manager shared that he is committed to having more communication between the Council and City staff be part of the conversation and allow more transparency.

Councillor Carbone stressed the importance of having meetings as needed throughout the year with the City Council and City Manager. He echoed comments made by other Councillors regarding affordable housing and a day center. He offered comments about open space being a priority and shared comments made by residents with their concerns on costs related to BEUDO and he offered the suggestion of a public loan program.

Councillor Nolan shared that the City should ensure there is more movement on the City Council part and referenced data that was the City's budget page online. She noted that funding should go more towards goals and priorities and its not just about dollars spent, but outcomes delivered.

She asked for more information on climate work going forward. Deputy City Manager O'Riordan shared that the City is looking at Capital Budget investments to make sure municipal facilities are electric facilities as soon as possible with resilience planning. Councillor Nolan offered suggestions for long term planning when related to climate resilience and shared

comments from members of the community that stressed how trees are an essential part of infrastructure. City staff noted that the report does reflect the importance of funding the improvement of tree canopy.

Councillor Carbone shared concerns about some of the properties being built and how they may have a negative effect on values to homes in the future. He suggested the City add more trees and plants on City owned streets to raise the value of properties and not decrease it.

Councillor Nolan concluded by asking City Staff if there was anything needed from the City Council that would be helpful moving forward. The City Manager shared he believed they were off to a good start and looks forward to following up and testing out the right way to get input and integrate that with professional staff.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Mayor Siddiqui who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Carbone – Yes

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Zondervan – Yes

Mayor Siddiqui – Yes

Yes – 7, No – 0, Absent -2. Meeting adjourned.

Attachment A – Presentation titled “City of Cambridge Capital Spending/Public Investment”

The City Clerk’s Office received 16 written communications, Attachments B-Q.

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:

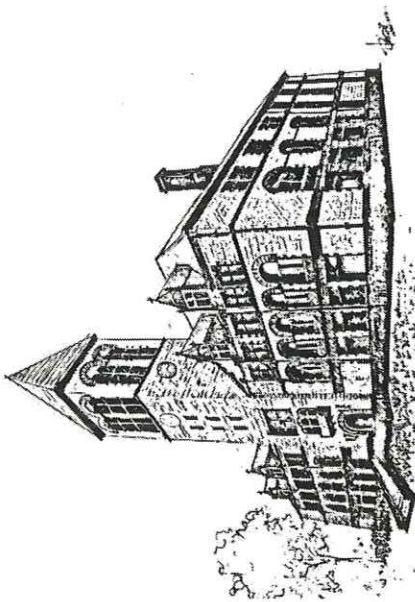
https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/434?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=ad62cf5e0185a757258bb47088d29e4b

A communication was received from Budget Director Taha Jennings, transmitting Cambridge Public Investment presentation.

Attachment A



City of Cambridge Capital Spending / Public Investment



February 2, 2023

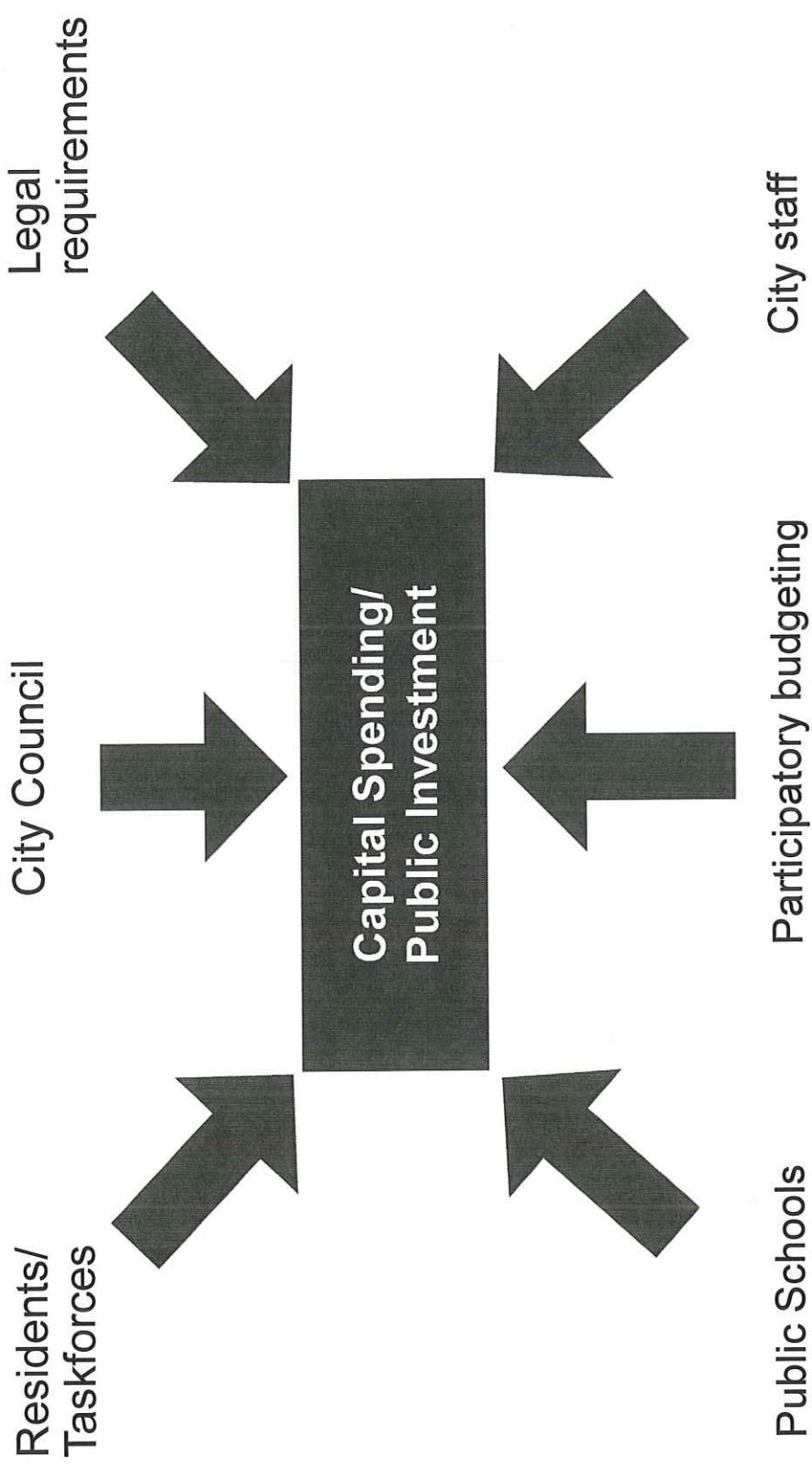
City Council Finance Committee Hearing

Executive Summary

- The City of Cambridge's capital spending/public investment is a direct reflection of its priorities and values as a community and is shaped by many sources of input
- Capital is different from operating spending as it supports multi-year projects and acquisition of long-term assets
- It is guided by the principles of adding long term value to the community, appropriately managing the taxation rate, and maintaining creditworthiness
- While the majority of capital projects are processed via the Capital Budget, there are other sources of support, which are also subject to City Council approval
- Department Capital requests are first evaluated by the Capital Budget Committee, then City Manager, with ultimate approval sitting with City Council
- There are several large projects being considered for future capital investment that will need to be prioritized
- While increasing debt is an option to grow total capital spending, there are many factors to consider when evaluating how much debt is appropriate for the City to take on
- Today's presentation will provide an overview of the capital budget/public investment planning process and considerations regarding City debt, in order to lay the groundwork for discussions about future investments



The City of Cambridge's capital spending/public investment is a direct reflection of its priorities as a community and shaped by many inputs



Capital spending supports acquisition and maintenance of long-term assets

Operating	Capital
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Support day to day expenses▪ Support acquisition of, and improvement to, long-term assets (>5 years useful life)
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Funds must be expended within fiscal year▪ Funds carry over until project is completed
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Salaries and benefits▪ Supplies (e.g., road salt)▪ Training▪ Land▪ Buildings▪ Equipment▪ Infrastructure (streets/sewers)



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It is guided by the principles of adding long term value, appropriately managing the taxation rate, and maintaining creditworthiness

Capital Spending Public Investment Philosophy

Strategic investment that provides long term added value to the community

Maintains adequate reserves to maximize credit worthiness, maintains an adequate level of working capital and allows for the appropriate management of taxation.

Prudent debt management that accords with federal & state laws and regulations.



While the majority of capital projects are supported via the Capital Budget, there are other sources of support

FY22 Capital Spending		Description
1) Capital Budget	\$83.9 M	Main source for funding capital projects; 5-year plan create each annual capital planning cycle
2) Free Cash	\$34.0 M	City Council approved individual capital free cash appropriations including 689 Mass Ave and Danehy changing facility
3) Community Preservation Act	\$17.5 M	Surcharge on property tax bills to fund eligible projects. Spent on Affordable Housing 80%, Open Space 10%, and Historic Preservation 10%
4) Mitigation Funds	\$1.9 M	Private/ Developer funds designated to be used for community benefits pledge to the City through zoning amendments
5) Grants (Capital)	\$1.0 M	Fire, Water and Traffic and Parking funded capital projects through grants in FY22
		TOTAL: \$138.3M

Additional detail following

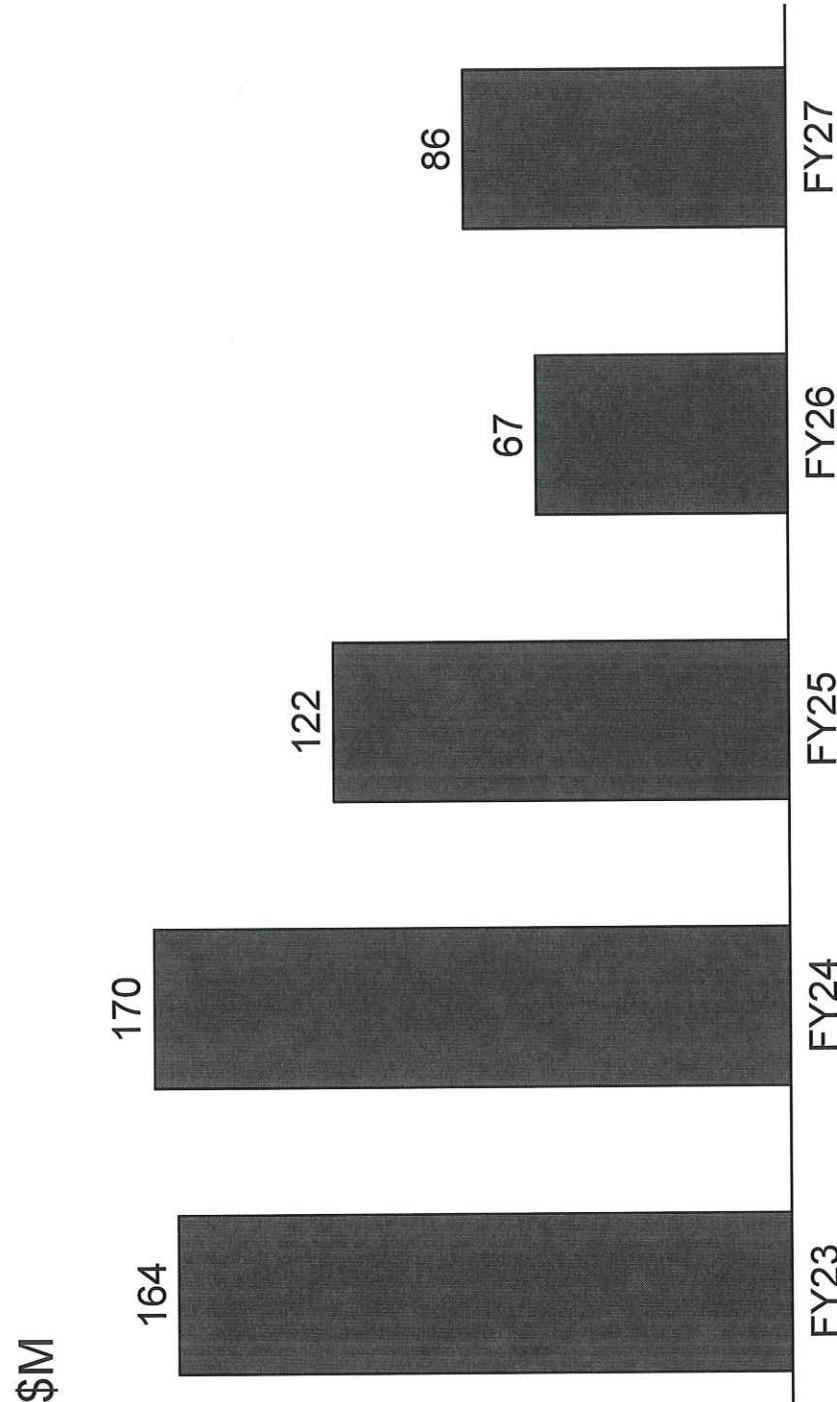
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1. CAPITAL BUDGET/PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND

The Capital Budget/Public Investment Fund is one of the most significant components of the City's financial plan

FY23-FY27 Public Investment Fund Appropriation Plan (as of 5/3/22)



1. CAPITAL BUDGET/PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND

The Capital Budget is funded via multiple sources, mainly bonds

FY23-FY27 Planned Sources of Capital (\$M)

		FY23	FY24-FY27
Total:	\$609M		
Sewer bond proceeds	178.2		Sewer bond proceeds supported by sewer service charges
Bond proceeds	231.4		FY22 General Obligation bonds sold at true interest cost of 1.9% due to AAA rating in March 2022
Property taxes	81.3		An appropriation of current property tax
Dept. revenue	51.8		Revenue from user fees (e.g., building permits, golf course, rec center)
Water fund balance	5.8		Balance of water fund assets
Chapter 90	13.4		State support for eligible roadway expenditures
Other ¹	47.6		Sewer service charges, water service charges, community development block grant, parking fund revenues, short-term rental community impact fee, street preservation offset fund, tree program revenues
\$164M total in FY23	\$445M planned FY24-FY27		- subject to revision

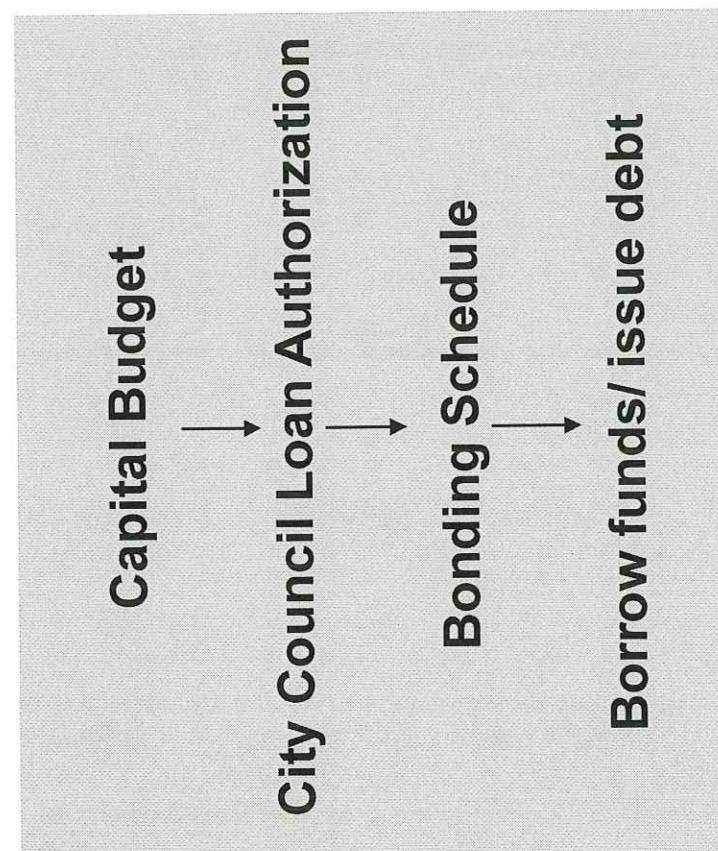


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1. CAPITAL BUDGET/PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND

The City finances some capital budget projects through bonds to add stability to budget and spread cost out of over the life of the project

- Requires loan approvals to issue bonds for specific projects
- Once the City Council approves (authorizes) a loan order for a capital project (typically with adoption of the Capital Budget, but sometimes off-cycle), the City can then borrow funds up to the amount approved
- The City does not need to borrow all of the approved funds at one time, which is reason for a multi-year bond schedule



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1. CAPITAL BUDGET/PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND

The Capital Budget is allocated to multi-year capital projects

FY23-FY27 Top Categories of Planned Capital Uses

- Affordable Housing Preservation & Development.
- Housing Programs and Services.
- Complete Streets Program.

(Accessibility/Cycling Safety/Traffic Calming/Vision Zero/Urban Forestry)

- Schools Program (The Tobin School).
- Municipal Facilities Improvements.

(Administration Buildings/Fire Stations/Youth Centers/Garages/Libraries/DPW facilities)

- Parks and Open Space Projects.
- Information Technology Initiatives.
- Participatory Budget Projects.
- Sewer and Stormwater.

(Renewing infrastructure/flood protection/clean water act/improving service levels)

- Water Infrastructure Improvements.



There are several *additional*/ large projects being considered for future capital investment that will need to be prioritized

- Arts and Culture facilities in Central Square
- Bridge/underpass – Alewife / Fresh Pond Apartments
- Broadband.
- BEUDO (Municipal facilities).
- Central Square Library.
- Public Schools program.
- DPW Facilities.
- Climate Change Resilience.

While continuing to consider:

- Affordable Housing.
- Complete Streets program.
- Municipal Facilities.
- Sewer systems/Stormwater systems/Water system
- Open Space/ Parks program.
- Deferred maintenance of existing facilities

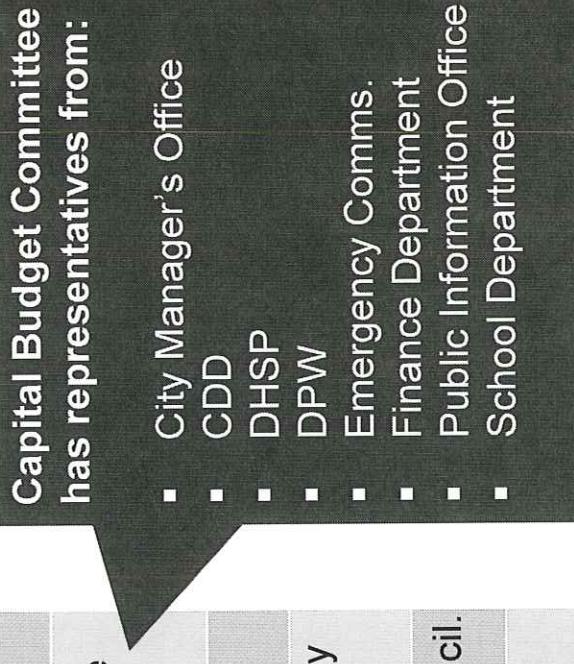
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1. CAPITAL BUDGET/PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND

Capital requests are first evaluated by the Capital Budget Committee, then City Manager, with ultimate approval sitting with City Council

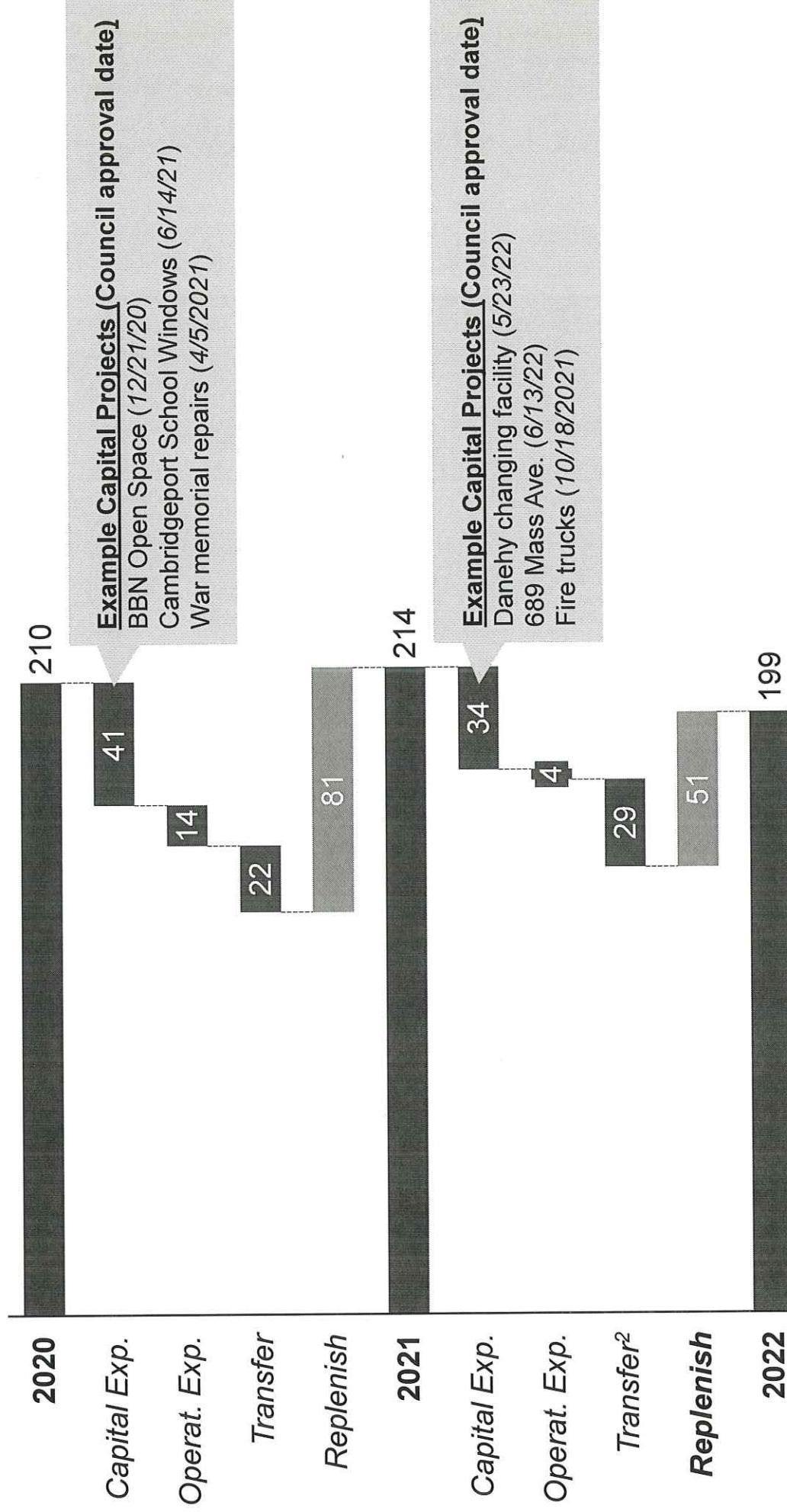
12/14/2022	Participatory Budget Cycle 9 results announced
12/17/2022	Briefing on FY24 budget guidelines by City Manager
1/20/2022	Deadline for Capital and E-Gov Budget submission to the Budget Office.
1/24/2023 THROUGH 3/1/2023	Formal department presentations of capital requests to the Capital Budget Committee.
1/31/2023	Capital presentation to City Council Finance Committee
3/6/2023	Capital Budget Committee makes recommendations to City Manager (tentative).
5/1/2023	Submission of the City Manager's Budget to the City Council.
5/16/2023	Public hearing on FY24 Capital Budget (<i>tentative</i>).
6/5/2023	Projected Budget adoption date.
7/1/2023	Begin execution of FY24 allotment plans.



2. FREE CASH

Capital investments are also made outside of the multi-year capital budget via Council approved free cash expenditures

Certified Free Cash (\$M)



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While increasing debt is an option, there are many factors to consider when evaluating how much debt is appropriate for the City to issue

Debt Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Policies to ensure long-term financial advantage to the City and its residents, while working to maintain AAA credit ratings<ul style="list-style-type: none">– AAA ratings help save millions of dollars each year in interest costs
Arbitrage Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Bonds have spending requirements each year that must be meet
Budget Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Debt service payments impact tax levy and water and sewer rates<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Debt payment and interest more than 10% of FY23 budget
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Maintaining best practice levels of debt enable capital plan and bond schedule to be adjusted yearly
Project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Internal project management capacity is a constraint – team currently managing twelve major projects (e.g., Tobin School, 689 Mass Ave)
External Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Cost escalation for estimates developed prior to authorization<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Market volatility■ Construction bidding climate■ Interest rates



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Thank you

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Erwin, Nicole

Attachment B

From: Diane Martin <moumar@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 1, 2023 12:36 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk; City Manager
Subject: Upcoming budget meeting

Dear Members of Cambridge City Council and City Manager Yi-An Huang,

I wanted to attend Tuesday's Finance meeting but as it's changed to Thursday and I can no longer participate, I hope you will give my email the same attention that you would my public comments.

I advocate for *full implementation of the UFMP, planting more and bigger trees, caring and proper watering of city trees, and creation of a Parks & Forestry Department with new management.* I support a City of Cambridge budget that recognizes that trees that are well-cared for (not over-mulching, amply watered) are a very cost-effective way to mitigate the effects of climate change; and that public green space and naturally shaded areas will become ever-more important as Cambridge rushes to meet its goal to add more and denser housing.

The US Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)) website states, "Trees and other plants help cool the environment, making vegetation a simple and effective way to reduce urban heat islands....Shaded surfaces, for example, may be 20–45°F (11–25°C) cooler than the peak temperatures of unshaded materials." [Recent research outlined in today's Guardian](#) reveals cooling cities with trees results in fewer heat related deaths.

What's happening to trees in my North Cambridge neighborhood that includes the Linear Path, is indicative of a city government that gives a half-hearted effort to protect and nurture existing trees and plant more trees, in spite of its annual commitments. An example is tree #3 in front of my house - the city has had to replace two others in the last 10 years due to street work and then a second tree was hit by the street cleaner. Not a good record for my street tree. Each time my tree is replaced, is it counted as a new tree? Is the City fining residential developers for cutting trees they shouldn't (it happened next door to me at 38 Madison about 6 weeks ago). I believe the City of Cambridge is not holding to their own goals and that it is changing data to reflect results more favorable to the City. [Click here for the Cambridge Day article.](#)

As you debate the city budget, fully fund the planting and maintenance of trees and public green spaces.

Kindly,
Diane Martin
34 Madison Avenue #1
Email: moumar@comcast.net

Erwin, Nicole

ATTACHMENT C

From: Seymour Kellerman <seymourkellerman@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 31, 2023 7:18 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Budget to plant more, bigger trees now!

Dear Councilors,

Please allocate sufficient funds to plant more trees on our streets and in our parks.

Please include this request in the Council record.

Thank you,

Seymour Kellerman
Cogswell Ave
Cambridge 02140

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment D

From: S Ringler <sringle23@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 7:34 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: TUESDAY'S Finance Committee -Budget Hearing

Dear Finance Committee,

My top two priorities for inclusion in next year's budget, in order, are:

1. much more funding for Cambridge-HEART because we really need an un-armed response to mental health crises.
2. increase the total annual tree planting by 25% to mitigate the current failures and add planting of 225 more street trees to meet the Urban Forest Master Plan 2023 goal. Trees are an important aspect of social justice

We are in a climate crisis and a social justice crisis. The current level of police funding is helping neither. You need to align the budget to the REAL needs of our city, not just continue in the same old groove that is NOT working.

Thank you.

Susan Ringler

82 Kinnaird St.

From: Elizabeth Greywolf <esgreywolf@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 6:11 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: no time to skimp on trees

I have been living in Cambridge since 1967 and applaud continued attention with the main issues which govern how rapidly Cambridge can respond to climate change. There is no longer any doubt climate change is the most important issue of our lifetime, and that maintaining and increasing tree canopy is a crucial part of managing carbon sequestering. I urge the Council to continue expanding that capacity; planting more and older trees, and developing city-wide plans for sufficiently watering those trees planted each year. I think there is a need for educating and encouraging citizen participation in that wateroong process, as is obvious every summer when so many new plantings languish and die from insufficient watering. Thank you for your consideration in expanding this vital work.

Elizabeth Greywolf
17 Buena Vista Park, 1st Floor
0214

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment F

From: nonie valentine <nonie.valentine1@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 3:49 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Finance Committee requests for tree planting/protecting

Greetings, Councillors,

I'm writing to make some budgetary requests to do with planting and care of Cambridge trees, aka essential infrastructure for our city. I watched miserably as a whole host of trees, younger and older, were decimated by drought at Danehy Park last year because the irrigation system, which broke down repeatedly, was refused a proper upgrade by the authorities there.

It's time to plan for real on difficult weather events and protect our tree canopy over the long haul.

Specifically:

Could you plant larger saplings than previously as they do much better?

Could you make up for the decimation last year by planting an additional 25% or more this year? At Danehy they are needed to be in stands closer together to help each other survive.

Could you budget for an Emergency Drought Fund to prepare for future likelihoods like this year's drought?

And this is critical: Re-organize to create an independent Parks & Forestry Department assembled from existing groups in the various departments? In the existing system, tree maintenance for climate mitigation gets lost in other priorities which we cannot let stand as our climate situation is more visibly urgent.

Vis a vis Danehy Park: City Council supported a new irrigation system as I understand it, but my maintenance contact there tells me that the improvements are not really an upgrade, just more of the same half-measures taken until now. A new irrigation system is what's needed there, one that calibrates the necessary watering rather than wasting water in runoff across the road for example.

I trust that you feel the urgency of some of these issues for which I am grateful. It is time to steadily put our money where our mouths are so I request that you allocate the funds needed to try to restore and protect over time the canopy we need to provide the climate benefits we all know about now.

Many, many thanks.

Nonie Valentine
4 Washington Ave.

From: Kelly Dolan <kelly.dolan.kd@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 3:38 PM
To: Azeem, Burhan; Carlone, Dennis; McGovern, Marc; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Zondervan, Quinton; Mallon, Alanna; City Clerk; City Manager; Simmons, Denise; nirwin@cambridgema.gov; Nolan, Patricia; Toner, Paul
Subject: Finance Committee

Dear Finance Committee

Thank you for making the FY24 Budget Process more transparent and inclusive.

Concerned to see that the first draft of your Budget Priorities did not highlight the investment and protection of the city's tree canopy, nor did it list trees under Climate Resiliency.

Recently the Urban Forest Division presented a much delayed update on the status of the city's tree canopy. Link below.

While the report did provide some encouraging news, the city was too quick to declare that our implementations of the Urban Forest Master Plan have improved our tree canopy. A more accurate analysis from the data would be that changes to the original benchmark metrics for prior year comparisons, and improved technology for canopy capture indicate that the actual tree loss was smaller than originally calculated. We have yet to see an improvement in the overall restoration of our canopy. The report also highlighted that the grave disparity of tree cover by neighborhood has grown.

Clearly the measures taken so far by the city such as the Tree Ordinance were unsuccessful to prevent some very public illustrations of large tree loss such as Vassal Lane, Volpe, Linear and Danehy Park. There are far too many recommendations from the Urban Forest Master Plan that have yet to be realized or implemented, the majority of which are not even under the direct control of the Urban Forestry Division.

There needs to be funding that ensures that CDD develops zoning regulations and early design phase requirements to better protect large canopy trees, and to develop better sidewalk design and protections for street trees which are vital for ensuring environmental justice in tree deprived neighborhoods.

There also needs to be funding to develop a more effective way to care for existing street trees and a system to engage and educate residents or local groups to become more involved, as well as the establishment of a Tree Trust.

The UFD recently did a great job developing a brand new system to locally grow more productive replacement trees, but that process illustrated how long such programs take before they can contribute enough impact to be effective. Those teams, protocols and systems need to be established now, before the canopy sustains even more losses and becomes an insurmountable task.

So far the City has appointed an Arborist as the Tree Warden, but has armed him with only a squirt gun, a paper ordinance and a spade, while our trees are threatened with chainsaws, bulldozers, and droughts. That's no way to grow and protect a vital city asset. The Urban Forest Division was established only four years ago and has a modest \$2.97m budget and is already being asked to self fund from its own ordinance revenue while waiting for additional allocations if needed. In FY20/FY21 there was almost \$1 million dollars in the Public Shade Investment Program that was subsequently eliminated.

If the city truly wants to grow and invest in the tree canopy and ensure that it is a protected resource it needs to make the same upfront strategic infrastructure investments we have made in other city resources, just like we have done with our world class water supply.

Looking forward to the City Council's focus and action for our tree canopy going forward.

Kelly Dolan
Greg Berndt
Upland Road
Sara Berndt
Haskell Street

Tree Canopy Assessment 2009-2020

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/publicworksdepartment/Forestry/treecanopyassessment2020/cambridgecanopyassessment2009202012622.pdf>

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Sent from Gmail Mobile

From: Judy Johnson <shakatam@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 3:27 PM
To: City Council
Cc: cambridge4Trees@gmail.com
Subject: Finance Committee:support budget to plant more, bigger trees now

Please include this in the 31 Jan 2023 FINANCE COMMITTEE record.

Dear councilors, the council affirmed that planting trees is a key element in our climate change response when it declared in 2021 that trees are “essential infrastructure”. Here are some budget requests:

- 1.) plant larger saplings: Cambridge data shows 1-in-4 fail within five years & larger survive longer
- 2.) increase the total planting by 25% to mitigate the current failures
- 3.) add planting of 225 more street trees to meet the Urban Forest Master Plan 2023 goal
- 4.) add planting of at least 100 trees to start recovery from the 2022 Danehy Park drought disaster

Budget for a “Drought Emergency Fund” for expanded emergency watering programs for both recent plantings and existing larger trees.

Re-organize to create an independent Parks & Forestry Department assembled from existing groups in the various departments.

The Danehy Park drought disaster proves that trees and climate change were not a priority of Human Services (the department that oversees the park). It's a great example of how we have too many departments servicing our parks. Each department must meet their other commitments as well as those to parks and trees. It's unfair to have each make climate change choices. For instance, Public Works has competing priorities with its unquestionable, mission critical services such as: snow removal, paving streets, fixing sidewalks, flood prevention and recovery. But streets might be paved every 20 years while trees might last as long as a building.

An independent Parks and Forestry Department will be better at managing trees as the long-term capital investment that they are.

Judy Johnson
55 Antrim Street

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment I

From: Margaret Studier <margaretstudier@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 11:21 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Trees

I strongly support all of the issues Charlie Teague spelled out in his email.
Please increase the amount of money available to support and increase
the number of trees in Cambridge--money needed to plant and
nurture them.

One suggestion would be to hire young people in the summer to help with
watering trees.

Cordially,

Margaret Studier
14A Allen St.
Member of the Cambridge4Trees group

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment J

From: Rika Welsh <rikaqui@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 10:58 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Budgeting for Tree care

Please follow the points sent to you by our Tree group, Charles in particular lays out our concerns clearly. I will not waste your time reiterating.

Thank you
Rika AND Charles Welsh
616 Green Street
02139

Sent from my iPhone

From: Annette LaMond <annettelamond@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 10:28 AM
To: McKenna, Brooke; Wolfe, Andreas
Cc: City Manager; City Clerk; Watkins, Kathy
Subject: Brattle Street Safety Improvement Project – Comments for Community Meeting, 1/31/23

Dear Ms. McKenna and Mr. Wolfe,

I am writing to urge you to maintain the existing bike lanes on Brattle Street, from Sparks Street to Fresh Pond Parkway. (Note: these lanes, which required removal of parking spaces on alternate sides of the street, were installed in 2010; they function well – even though the lines have faded.)

This stretch of Brattle is wider than the section between Mason Street and Craigie Street. Separated bike lanes are not needed for safety. A review of the Cambridge Police Department's crash database does not raise any red flags concerning cycling accidents along Brattle. Further, Brattle is not part of the City's ordinance-mandated bike network.

Maintaining the parking in the current configuration near the intersection of Brattle and Sparks is important to two neighborhood institutions – the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston and Buckingham, Browne & Nichols School Lower School. Both the church's parishioners and the school's parents, many who are not Cambridge residents, depend on Brattle Street parking. Special needs of the church are funerals, weddings, seasonal gatherings, as well as hall rentals to outside groups. The recent removal of parking spaces on Brattle east of Craigie Street adds to the importance of maintaining existing parking.

There is also the question of the appropriateness of a two-way bike lane on a street that curves and is dotted with driveways and side streets.

There is an "S" curve on Brattle between Sparks and Appleton that would affect the safety of a two-way bike lane on these blocks. Two issues here:

- First, drivers emerging from Riedesel Avenue have limited visibility of approaching traffic (right as well as left). This turn already requires a driver to edge into Brattle before turning. A two-way bike lane would make turns more hazardous.
- Second, three houses on the curved section of Brattle (Nos. 151, 155, and 155) have driveways from which vehicles back into the street. (Similar driveways – requiring backing maneuvers – are found farther down Brattle.)

In addition to my concerns about the safety of two-way bike lanes on this section of Brattle, I ask you to consider some simple measures that would make the street safer. The safety of Brattle's intersections between Sparks and Fresh Pond Parkway would be improved by raised pedestrian islands at Appleton, Fayerweather, Lakeview and Lexington. A raised median on Brattle at Lowell would improve safety by lowering the turning speed of drivers turning left from Brattle onto Appleton.

As for the section of Brattle Street between Fresh Pond Parkway and Mt. Auburn Street, the speed limit there could be lowered to 20 mph with a mid-block speed table.

Several small digital speed readers (not large trailers) at two to four key points on Brattle would be welcome.

Finally, the most important Brattle Street safety issue (as measured by accidents reported in the CPD crash database) is the intersection of Brattle, Craigie, and Sparks. In June 2019, your department held a community meeting to present the

concept of a modern roundabout as the safest solution for the intersection. At that time, one of the presenters indicated that a design for a modern roundabout was nearly complete. Can you please provide an update on the state of the roundabout plan and whether you will be proposing a modern roundabout for the intersection in the City's capital budget for the next fiscal year?

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Annette LaMond

7 Riedesel Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

From: Gabriela Romanow <gdromanow@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 9:36 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Funds for Trees Please!

Hello councilors,

I am writing to urge you to increase funding for tree planting and maintenance across Cambridge in the new budget.

We all know how important trees are in absorbing carbon, providing shade, offering beauty and contributing to healthier communities.

Planting more (larger saplings have a better survival rate) and consistent care, especially watering by the town, are two very simple inputs that can have a great impact on our city.

As far as I can tell, planting and maintaining trees are among the easiest win/win/wins with which a city can improve itself and frankly, the world at large.

I urge you to include significant funds for tree planting and maintenance, including some emergency funding for potential climate impacts, in this year's budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gabriela Romanow
1010 Memorial Drive

From: Melissa Ludtke <melissa.ludtke@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 9:30 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Finance Committee meeting, Tuesday, Jan. 31, a city residents comments re: budget for our urban tree canopy

Hello City Councillors,

Please include this in the 31 Jan 2023 FINANCE COMMITTEE record.

I am a member of the Cambridge4 Trees group because I care deeply about the preservation of the trees we have in Cambridge and the planting of new ones, as we make up for the ones we've lost and adhere to the city's Urban Forest plan. As you engage in discussions about the city's budget, it is vital to put taxpayers' money into funding the preservation and expansion of our urban tree canopy.

Here are my budget requests:

- Funds to plant larger saplings: Cambridge data show that one-in-four saplings that the city has planted have failed within five years. Larger saplings have a better survival rate.
- Funding to increase the total planting by 25 percent to mitigate our city's tree loss.
- Funds to add the planting of 225 more street trees to meet the Urban Forest Master Plan goal set for this year, as well as 100 trees to launch the recovery from the loss of trees due to the 2022 drought and watering failure in Danehy Park.
- Dedicated funding into a "Drought Emergency Fund" for expanded emergency watering programs for recent plantings and existing larger trees.

To oversee these budget items, I believe the city should create a Parks & Forestry Department assembled from tree-related groups in the various departments. This department can better manage the city's trees with a focus that acknowledges the long-term capital investment that trees are in this time of our climate crisis

Melissa Ludtke
30 Buena Vista Park

Melissa Ludtke
Author, Book in progress: Locker Room Talk: A Woman's Struggle to Get Inside
<https://www.melissaludtke.com/>
Co-Producer, *Touching Home in China: in search of missing girlhoods*
Website

phone: 617-416-1989

From: Madeleine A <master4222@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 9:22 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Finance Committee Meeting 1-31-23: Please Fund Bigger and Better Trees

Dear Councillors:

We are spending \$10M to “redesign” one park, yet we don’t have the money to fund the trees that go into the parks? This doesn’t make sense. Here are some budget requests:

- 1) Save money and get 4X better results by following the latest science on how mature trees help new trees survive by feeding and watering them through underground networks. This might require sending staff to field training. <https://mothertreeproject.org/>
- 2) Save money and trees by creating an independent Parks & Forestry Department to eliminate duplication of effort and lack of resources across six departments, with an emphasis on meeting the Urban Forest Master Plan goals. Only Urban Forestry has been able to put enough effort on meeting their UFMP goals; and there is no one in charge of advocating across departments to work together to meet these goals.
- 3) Create a Climate Emergency Fund so Urban Forestry has the tools it needs to mitigate droughts and other anticipated climate-related problems. Fund a part-time volunteer manager to coordinate during emergencies so the Urban Forestry superintendent doesn’t have to do his job and manage a staff of untrained volunteers.

Thank you,

Madeleine Aster
North Cambridge
The Purple Zone (tree deficit)

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment 0

From: Mary Buchinger Bodwell <mbuchingerbodwell@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 29, 2023 9:31 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Please include this in the 31 Jan 2023 FINANCE COMMITTEE record

Please include this in the 31 Jan 2023 FINANCE COMMITTEE record.

| Dear councillors, the council affirmed that planting trees is a key element in our climate change response when it declared in 2021 that trees are "essential infrastructure". The budget needs to reflect that priority.

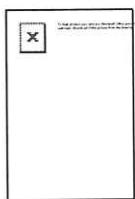
Please consider these budget requests:

- 1.) plant larger saplings: Cambridge data shows 1-in-4 fail within five years & larger survive longer
- 2.) increase the total planting by 25% to mitigate the current failures
- 3.) add planting of 225 more street trees to meet the Urban Forest Master Plan 2023 goal
- 4.) add planting of at least 100 trees to start recovery from the 2022 Danehy Park drought disaster

Thank you for your service to our community.

Mary Buchinger Bodwell
53 Regent St.
Cambridge, 02140

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Mary Buchinger Bodwell, PhD
www.marybuchinger.com
[New England Poetry Club](#)



Available [HERE](#)

From: Charles Teague <charles.d.teague@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 29, 2023 4:46 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Finance Committee: SUPPORT budget to plant more, bigger trees now

Please include this in the 31 Jan 2023 FINANCE COMMITTEE record.

Dear councillors, the council affirmed that planting trees is a key element in our climate change response when it declared in 2021 that trees are “essential infrastructure”. Here are some budget requests:

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Budget for a “Drought Emergency Fund” for expanded emergency watering programs for both recent plantings and existing larger trees.

Re-organize to create an independent Parks & Forestry Department assembled from existing groups in the various departments.

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An independent Parks and Forestry Department will be better at managing trees as the long-term capital investment that they are.

Charles Teague
90 Jackson Street

Attachment Q

2/2/2023

Young Kim
17 Norris Street

I do not have to tell you, the members of the Finance Committee, that at the very basic level, City's budgeting process is no different than your household budgeting. You set up your goals and priorities and you set up a budget for daily living expenses and for long term goals such as college funds for your children.

For the City's capital budget, the need for a capital budget item must be able to be traced to its authorizing source; each budget item must be fully transparent and each budget item must be fully accountable. The FY23 capital budget process failed on all three accounts and I am here to ask you not to repeat the same mistakes in the FY24 process.

Take a look at FY23 capital project budget item, Public Works: Streets - Mass Avenue - Harvard Sq To Alewife Brook Parkway (Partial Build). There are so many inconsistencies and confusing terms among the budget book, the Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO), the project website, MassAve4 - Mass Ave Partial Construction - City of Cambridge, MA (cambridgema.gov) and other CSO related websites.

1. Project webpage is based on calendar years whereas the budget book on fiscal year. Then there is “separated bike lane year” (May 1 – April 30 of the following year) when construction began or the project was completed.”
2. The Amended Cycling Safety Ordinance “set ambitious requirements for the installation of approximately 25 miles of separated bike lanes within the next five to seven years.” Yet, the full funding profile has not been included in FY22 and FY23 approved budget.
3. “In April 2022, the City Council approved the recommendation (of the City Manager) that MassAve4 Segments A and B undergo partial construction” at an estimated budget of \$40M. But more than that, CMA 2022 #74 adopted on 4/25/2022, also approved estimated budget of \$15M for Segments C and D to undergo full construction. The FY23 5-year appropriation plan shows only the \$40M bond proceeds for FY24 but did not include the \$15M for Segments C & D in the proposed FY23 budget the City Manager submitted the following week.
4. MassAve4 Project is mandated by CSO as amended in late 2020. It named the 4 segments of this project as Dudley St to Beech St (Segment A); Roseland St to Waterhouse St (Segment B); Garden St to Church St (Segment C); and Dunster St to Plympton St (Segment D). However, the approved FY23 budget changed the name of this project to Mass Avenue - Harvard Sq To Alewife Brook Parkway (Partial Build).
 - a. This seem to indicate that this budget item is for Segments A & B with the added scope of revisit of the quick-build installations of Porter Square and Mass Ave - Dudley St to Alewife Brook Parkway projects for the same budget as Segments A & B in CMA 2022 #74.
 - b. There is a caveat “As the scope of work evolves, the cost estimates will be updated.” Does this mean the budget book is a blank check and the budget of the revisit of quick-build installations will be added later, perhaps in FY24?
 - c. When will capital budget for Segment C & D be added to the budget?

5. Projects - City of Cambridge, MA (cambridgema.gov) names River Street Reconstruction Project as one of the CSO projects currently undergoing public engagement. Its project website states "The project will begin in November 2022 (Q1 FY23) with excavation of test pits throughout the project area to confirm utility locations. The project is scheduled to conclude in the Fall of 2025 (Q4 FY25) with final paving and landscaping." However, the FY23 budget book stated that "On March 2, 2022, the City sold \$92,300,000 in General Obligation Bonds to finance capital projects such as... River Street Reconstruction;..."
 - a. Capital funding for the River Street Reconstruction is integrated into that of Public Works: Streets - Central Square so its budget is hidden in the budget book.
 - b. Project improvements will include among others separated bike lanes so the budget for CSO implementation is unknown.
 - c. 5-Year Appropriation Plan only shows FY23 and FY24 plans instead of more detailed breakdown for the duration of the project in line with Project timeline.
6. True cost of CSO implementation is difficult if not impossible to account for
 - a. Cost of quick-build installation is aggregated as the performing department's Operating Budget
 - b. No way to generate a report on all the contracts related to a project per Public Record Request response
 - c. Based on a project page's timeline and 5-year appropriation plan indicates the engineering support for a capital project is not included in the appropriation plan
 - d. Some CSO implementation budget is integrated into a larger umbrella project
 - e. When the city needed additional operating fund, then City Manager DePasquale simply submitted an agenda item requesting the fund from the Free Cash (March 7, 2022 City Council City Manager's Agenda Item #11)

Please ensure traceability, transparency and accountability not only in the capital budgeting process but in all City processes.

Thank you,
Respectfully yours,
Young Kim