



FEBRUARY 2026 MEETING AGENDA

The Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) is holding a meeting online via Zoom on February 12, 2026 from 5:30 – 7:00 PM

PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO JOIN BY 5:30 PM

Please keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking

Danielle Jones-McLaughlin
Acting Chair

Nieta Greene
Cecelia Cobb
Asherah Davis
Deepti Nijhawan
Emma Pan
Erum Sattar
Zach Solomons
Jim Wilcox

Rachel Tanenhaus
*Executive Director/
ADA Coordinator*

Kate Thurman
*Deputy Director/
Assistant ADA Coordinator*

Maya Friedrich
Administrative Assistant

- 1. Introductions** (5 min)
- 2. Announcements** (2 min) – CCPD Staff/Board
- 3. Approval of January Minutes** (2 min) – CCPD Board
See pages 3-33 of this packet
- 4. Recap of Retreat Working Groups** (20 min) – CCPD Staff/Board
See pages 34-37 of this packet
- 5. Chair's Report** (5 min) – Danielle Jones-McLaughlin
- 6. Staff Report** (10 min) – Rachel Tanenhaus
- 7. Public Works Update** (10 min) – Jim Wilcox, *Engineer, Department of Public Works*
- 8. Public Input** (4 min) – General Public
See pages 2&3 of this agenda packet for instructions on providing public comment

CART/closed captioning will be provided for this meeting

Captions can be turned on within the Zoom platform or streamed in a separate URL at <https://bit.ly/CCPDcaptioning>.

(captions will not appear until the meeting has started)

The City of Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, does not discriminate, including on the basis of disability. The Commission for Persons with Disabilities will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request.

**The next CCPD meeting will be held on
Thursday, March 12, 2026 from 5:30-7:00 PM.**

Members of the public: See instructions on pages 2 & 3 on how to watch the CCPD meeting and provide public comment via Zoom

Approved 3/12/2026

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, February 12, 2026 CCPD Meeting

Online via Zoom

Meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m.

Present:

Members: Cecelia Cobb, Asherah Davis, Nieta Greene, Danielle Jones-McLaughlin, Deepti Nijhawan, Erum Sattar, Jim Wilcox

Absent: Zachary Solomons, Emma Pan

Staff: Rachel Tanenhaus, Maya Friedrich, Kate Thurman

Other: Deputy Superintendent (DS) Buckowe Yam

Announcements:

- None

Approval of January 2026 Minutes:

- The January 2026 CCPD meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Recap of Retreat Working Groups:

Rachel discussed the notes from our May 2025 CCPD board retreat (see attached retreat notes for additional details):

- Rachel noted that in May of 2025 we had a retreat with facilitator/consultant Ora Grodsky to identify a direction for the board, identify our strengths and decide what to do with them. Several board and staff members had not met each other in person, so this was a valuable opportunity for us to connect face-to-face.
- Since May, we have experienced significant turnover on the board because several members' terms expired. In August 2025, the board voted to approve the working groups discussed at the retreat so they could begin working. However, additional planning of these groups did not occur as multiple board members' terms expired in September, and we were unable to hold several CCPD meetings in the fall due to lack of quorum.
- Today we will summarize the topics discussed and projects planned at the May retreat. Our current board members can then decide whether they want to pursue these projects or create new ones.
- At the retreat, the staff and board discussed what CCPD's roles and restrictions are as a government commission. Rachel highlighted the differences in processes and rules between the grassroots advocacy world and the government world.
- We talked about what it means to serve on an advisory board, how staff and board can support each other, and what kind of working groups we need. Working groups are limited to a certain size because of open meeting laws—there cannot be quorum at a private working group meeting, because if there is quorum we are required to have an open meeting. Working groups will develop projects in separate sessions and come to our open CCPD monthly meetings to present their work and receive feedback.
- Rachel put together a handout about what we “do and don't do” as an advisory board and staff (see attached document). Our CCPD ordinance from our founding in 1979 is hard to read and does not discuss the division of labor between board and staff, so we often must explain this distinction to stakeholders within the City and externally.

- At the Maya 2025 retreat, the board and staff discussed two main themes (the details below refer to input provided by the May 2025 board):
 - Improving monthly CCPD meetings
 - The board suggested improving how the Department of Public Works (DPW) update is delivered at our monthly meetings. Currently, our DPW representative goes through a list of projects and provides the status on each one. Board members suggested, alternatively, that DPW could spotlight an accessibility-related improvement project at each meeting and ask for the board’s feedback.
 - Board members expressed interest in returning to in-person or hybrid meetings. However, the spaces we used for our in-person meetings before the COVID pandemic are currently inaccessible for people with mobility or hearing-related disabilities. We plan to return to hybrid meetings when we can do so effectively and accessibly but are not sure when this will happen. We also need to acquire better technology for hybrid meetings. We look forward to these improvements and believe hybrid meetings will deepen relationships among our board.
 - Someone suggested “themes” for our monthly board meetings (for example, doing a disability pride theme in July).
 - Board members bring personal and professional expertise on a variety of disability-related topics, and we discussed how board members could speak at future meetings if they want to.
 - Board members can let us know what they want to hear about from meeting speakers. For example, Nieta recently suggested we should discuss how current immigration enforcement policies affect people with disabilities, and Rachel asked Carolina Almonte from the Human Rights Commission and Commission on Immigration Rights and Citizenship to speak to our board at a future meeting.
 - The board discussed how CCPD can interact with the current political climate while maintaining our role as a politically neutral entity. The CCPD staff clarified that though we cannot name specific politicians, we can discuss how policies are affecting the disability community.
 - The board requested regular updates on the City initiatives CCPD staff are involved in, which Rachel will continue to discuss in her staff report.
 - Initiating special projects
 - The board decided the following three working group projects would best garner the strengths of current members and address the needs of people with disabilities in Cambridge (see retreat notes attached for more details):
 - Resource sheets working group
 - Cambridge Participatory Budget (CPB) working group
 - New board member welcome packet working group
 - We identified some questions to consider when planning working groups:
 - What parameters should we set around working group membership?
 - How often should they meet and for how long?
- Current board members discussed how the retreat outcomes apply now, after significant board turnover:
 - A board member requested a working group specific discussion to determine whether to pursue these projects or different ones. Kate agreed that we should work on what group members are interested in.
 - Danielle suggested even if board members do not want to create the onboarding working group, it might be helpful to get feedback from new board members about what would have been helpful for their onboarding.
 - Nieta said the participatory budget process would benefit from CCPD participation and hopes the board will pursue that project.
 - Erum said that the issue of institutional memory is a problem across other City commissions and asked if the City manager or other leadership could help clean up the onboarding process for all boards. Kate

reaffirmed Erum's concerns and noted there are City employees currently working to improve this process.

- Asherah recommended board members email their thoughts on new possible working group ideas or feedback on the existing ideas so these ideas can be compiled in the agenda packet for a discussion at our next meeting.
- Cecelia expressed interest in the participatory budget process and recommended bringing a CPB speaker to talk to our board. Maya clarified Melissa Liu from CPB spoke to us in October but we would be happy to have her back next year!
- Danielle noted the next CPB cycle is starting soon, so we could possibly invite Melissa back in the coming months to talk more about the early stages of the process such as idea generation (last time she spoke they were in the voting stage).

Staff Report:

Rachel Tanenhaus reported:

- Today Rachel was in a focus group with the Boston Metropolitan Regional Planning Organization (MPO) who are currently working on their Coordinated State Human Services Transportation Plan.
 - They reached out to councils on aging and disabilities commissions to gather feedback on transportation issues.
 - Rachel suggested they talk to people outside of focus groups, so they will be coming to our presentation in March. They will do a brief presentation then request input.
- On Sundays March 1 & March 8, a nonprofit called Essential Partners is leading a two-part virtual workshop called Building Connections: Effective Tools for Community Connections.
 - Eight human rights commissions in the area, including Cambridge, are getting together to encourage healthy public discourse by promoting this free virtual workshop. It will provide tools to support healthier public dialogue.
 - The City of Cambridge has 25 spots and we can invite two members from our commission. There will also be optional networking sessions on both days from 4:30-5pm.
 - Registrants are required to attend both sessions on the 1st and 8th.
 - Three board members expressed interest (Cecelia, Erum and Asherah), so Rachel will email the organizers and confirm whether we can send three people.
- The City is in the process of rolling out our revised reasonable accommodations plan for applicants to and employees of the City of Cambridge who have disabilities.
 - Kate and Rachel have been working on this policy for several years and believe it will have a significant impact on the lives of City employees with disabilities.
- CCPD is joining a new City department! Although our office was previously housed under the Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), we are becoming part of the Equity & Inclusion (E&I) office. We are physically remaining at our current location at 51 Inman Street for now and are still administratively/fiscally part of DHSP through June but will fully join E&I for the next budget cycle.
- On March 11, Rachel will give a presentation to the Human Service and Veterans subcommittee of the City Council discussing how CCPD brings the voices of people with disabilities to City programs.
 - A board member asked if it was a public meeting—Rachel needs to confirm but believes so.
 - A board member expressed concerns that City Council has lacked concern for disability issues in the past, and Rachel noted that this committee reached out to us so she is hopeful that there is genuine interest in learning about our work.
 - A board member asked whether CCPD collaborates with the Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Rachel and Kate clarified we have not collaborated much with them but regularly work with other state entities like the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD).

- Kate announced that we will soon publish our Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II policy. This version is shorter than our current policy and removes archaic and offensive language.

Chair Report:

Danielle Jones-McLaughlin reported:

- The Healey-Driscoll state administration awarded \$290,000 in grants to Massachusetts organizations to facilitate job training for young adults with disabilities. Danielle and previous board members were involved with advocacy for job training for people with disabilities and were grateful to see this investment being made.

Public Works Report:

Jim Wilcox reported:

- Jim acknowledged the sentiment shared in the retreat debrief that board members would like the public works report to spotlight specific projects and their accessibility features. He said he would prefer to do this rather than go through a longer list of projects, but has a list of updates tonight.
- Carl Barron Plaza is still in progress
 - The park will be likely open to pedestrians in Spring.
 - The structure of “the ribbon”, a large piece of public art, is built and an artist will paint it once the weather becomes warmer.
- Several projects will begin in the spring and summer:
 - The City will add 3 new Portland Loo public toilets.
 - There is currently one in Harvard and one in Central, and additional toilets will be added to universal playground at Danehy Park, the Cambridge Common, and Flag Street at Memorial Drive
 - The Memorial Drive toilet will benefit people who come to bike/walk when the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) closes the road on weekends
 - Toilets will be open 24/7
 - Construction will begin on Dottie Doyle Way, including accessibility improvements such as the reverse of the one-way and the addition of several accessible parking spaces. The reversed direction will allow people parked on the driver’s side to exit their vehicles without exiting onto the grass slope.
 - 2 large projects will begin in the Port neighborhood:
 - Utility projects (2.5 years of construction on 7 streets in the Port neighborhood)
 - Reconstruction of Clement Morgan Park and the Tot Lot on Columbia Street
 - Implementation of the Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) will continue on Broadway from Columbia to Quincy Streets and on Cambridge Street from Prospect to 2nd Streets
 - Work will resume on projects that stopped over the winter including Harvard Square Plaza, Linear Park, Raymond Park and Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) work on Massachusetts Avenue from Cambridge Common to Alewife Brook Parkway.
- The City has a new contractor for citywide sidewalk maintenance for non-compliant pedestrian ramps. This is a \$3 million contract so there will be a lot of work once the weather improves.
- A CCPD staff member raised her concerns to Jim about snow-filled disability parking spots on residential streets.
 - DPW has informed us the City is not responsible for clearing them unless they abut City property, however they are impossible to clear without heavy equipment. When disabled residents have called us about this issue, we are unable to suggest a solution.
 - Jim said there are conversations internally within DPW about how to address this, as they receive calls about this issue as well. Snow removal has become difficult due to limited spaces left to stockpile snow

due to development and DPW has limited personnel resources. However, they are working with DHSP to brainstorm solutions.

- A board member re-iterated previous concerns about snow removal on the sidewalks in her neighborhood, which are not City-owned but abut inclusionary housing.
- A board member asked how the City handles snow removal around intersections and curb cuts where people cross the street, noting that these areas are often poorly cleared despite being a juncture to the public way.
 - Jim clarified that property owners are responsible for clearing through the ramp, but unfortunately when DPW plows roadways, snow sometimes gets plowed onto the ramps. During overnight hauling operations DPW has been clearing large piles at intersections, but it has taken a long time to address these areas due to limited capacity.
- A board member asked for more information about the construction at Carl Barron Plaza.
 - Jim expects the walkways through the area to open in spring, and the current fences will be removed. The artwork area will be fenced off until painting is done and should fully open in the summer.
 - The City will install partially-movable furniture that will be chained to the ground but can move a short distance.
 - Jim noted that additional updates can be viewed on the DPW website.
- A board member suggested that while the City is not currently required to clear out snow from residential disability parking spots, there may be a way to structurally change that through a petition to the City.
 - Jim reiterated that it's something that City is looking at but there are resource-related issues. When a snowstorm occurs, the people who plow snow also have other jobs like plumbing and trash removal, so shoveling over 1,000 disability parking spots across the City is not currently feasible.
 - The Board member suggested the City create a program to hire student shovelers to clear disability spots, but Jim noted many of the disability parking spots accumulate large amounts of plowed snow and must be cleared with heavy equipment.

Public Comment:

A resident expressed concerns about a lack of disability parking requirements for new construction of residential buildings and asked for this issue to be put on the next meeting agenda. He also suggested that this issue might be something a working group could look at. He expressed concerns that recent upzoning changes do not include accessible parking as a right and advocated for changing zoning framework to create accessible spots near accessible building entrances.

Another resident expressed similar concerns about how upzoning without disability parking affects disabled residents. She said she would be willing to collaborate with CCPD's staff and board to advocate for this policy change and garner support from concerned citizens.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maya Friedrich

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Advisory Board Retreat Notes

May 31, 2025

12-5 (lunch 12-1)

Location: 225 Franklin St, Boston, MA

Attending:

Facilitator: Ora Grodsky, Just Works Consulting

Staff: Maya Friedrich, Kate Thurman, Rachel Tanenhaus

Board: Keisha Greaves (chair), Danielle McLaughlin (secretary), Loring Brinckerhoff, Dan Stubbs, Emma Pan, Deepti Nijhawan

Purpose and Outcomes:

Purpose: Strengthen cohesion and collaboration among CCPD Advisory Board members.

Desired Outcomes:

- Build a sense of community and deepen relationships with one another.
- Shared understanding of the parameters of serving on a government commission—what is and isn't possible
- Shared understanding of the Advisory Board member role
- Clarify how the Advisory Board and CCPD staff can best support one another
- Identify Advisory Board goals and priority projects for the year ahead
- Determine what working groups are needed moving forward
- Consider how to make Advisory Board meetings more effective and meaningful

Openings and Introductions:

Board members and staff described their motivations for joining the CCPD and what talents/resources they bring to CCPD

What does CCPD do/not do?

See [“What We Do and Don’t Do”](#) handout.

Advisory Board Goals for the Next Year

Attendees split into three breakout groups, each made up of one staff and two board members. Groups were tasked with identifying goals they would like to create for the next year.

Ora identified two categories of goal areas for next year: improving meetings and initiating special projects via working groups. When the full group reunited to discuss ideas generated in the breakout groups, the following ideas were identified for each category:

Improving Meetings:

- A board member mentioned that the monthly Department of Public Works (DPW) report would be more helpful if, instead of reading a list of projects, one project were highlighted at each meeting and the DPW representative could specifically speak to accessibility improvements or issues relating to the project.
- Board members feel in-person or hybrid meetings would improve productivity and create stronger relationships between board members. CCPD staff clarified that while we hope to eventually return to hybrid meetings (fully in-person meetings would be inaccessible), the conference room at 51 Inman Street needs to be updated to be more accessible. They shared that the Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) has approved the budget request for new furniture that will create more space for mobility aid users to move around the room, and we will get an Owl device to improve the hybrid setup. We are unsure of the timeline on these updates so meetings will remain virtual for now.
- A group suggested creating targeted themes for each board meeting—for example, July is Disability Pride Month so a July meeting could be centered around that. They also mentioned inviting different board members to share their own knowledge about areas of expertise or invite speakers each month. A board member also requested we bring in speakers who have specific questions for us and can benefit from CCPD’s expertise.
- Board members requested updates at monthly meetings about how current government policies impact disability access.

- A group requested updates on City of Cambridge initiatives with which CCPD is involved.
- The board requested an opportunity at an upcoming meeting to discuss expectations of working groups to make sure group members agree on what their meeting frequency/scope of work will look like.
- Board members said it would be helpful to have opportunities at each meeting for working groups to share updates on their projects.

Special Projects:

- One theme discussed across breakout groups was creating a CCPD social media presence to increase our visibility. Rachel clarified that CCPD staff are currently meeting with DHSP's communications team to discuss an improved communications strategy, but that immediate and direct control of social media accounts by board members is unrealistic because everything must follow City communications procedures. CCPD staff will continue to provide updates and explore how the board can be more involved in our communications efforts. Ora suggested facilitating a social media Purpose, Outcomes, Process (POP) at a future board meeting. Board members also expressed interest in providing feedback on the newly launched CCPD website.
- Several groups expressed interest in creating welcome packets for new Cambridge residents, a project initiated by a past working group that never got off the ground.
- A group also brought up making a housing fact sheet for people with disabilities in Cambridge.
- Board members discussed strategizing to improve CCPD's involvement with the Cambridge Participatory Budget (CPB) project and making that process more accessible for people with disabilities.
- A board member suggested creating resource sheets for parents of Cambridge residents with disabilities.
- Several members expressed interest in creating a welcome/orientation packet for new CCPD board members.

Working Groups

Based on the special project ideas shared by board members, the board identified the following working groups to be voted on at the June CCPD meeting:

- **Resource sheets working group:** will include welcome packets for new Cambridge residents with disabilities, housing resources for people with disabilities, and resources for parents – Keisha and Emma expressed interest.
- **CPB working group:** will focus on CCPD’s role in the Cambridge Participatory Budget (CPB) process – Keisha, Danielle, and Deepti expressed interest.
- **New board member welcome packet working group:** will focus on developing orientation resources for new CCPD board members – Keisha and Loring expressed interest.

How can the Staff and Advisory Board support each other?

The CCPD staff asked the board how staff can better support them:

- A board member asked what resources were available through CCPD or the city if they were looking to create visibility for their personal business, understanding they cannot do that in their role as a CCPD member but rather as an individual Cambridge citizen. Kate recommended exploring the Economic Development Division, which offers workshops and grants for local business owners.
- Kate also mentioned that we can provide information and referral to community members looking to make their businesses/events more accessible.
- The board brought up exploring different ways CCPD could make meetings more engaging, such as planning interactive activities, creating check-ins/accountability for working groups and changing the focus of the DPW update.

Next steps:

- The board will vote on working groups at the June CCPD meeting and will initiate those groups following staff approval.
- Board leadership and staff will incorporate suggestions into upcoming meeting agendas.
- CCPD will continue to update the board on our plans to return to hybrid meetings once the Owl device arrives and the conference room is reorganized with new furniture.

What We Do (And Don't Do)

CCPD's Overall Purpose:

Making the City of Cambridge a welcoming and accessible place for people with all types of disabilities.

Parameters of CCPD Activities:

CCPD activities have some limits because we are part of Cambridge City government.

- We cannot be involved in partisan politics
 - We can talk about issues, but not people or parties
- We cannot promote private businesses
- We cannot do direct legislative lobbying
- Individuals can be involved in political, legislative, or business activities, but they cannot represent the Commission or use their position as Commissioners or the assets of the Commission (e.g., the Commission's logo) in those activities
- The Commission's assets can only be used for official Commission business
- We do not do fundraising as we are fully funded by the City

What the Staff Does:

- Works in relationship with everyone across the City, providing technical assistance
 - The City sees that there is a disability and inclusion angle to everything and we're invited to many tables within the City government
- Increases inclusive public engagement
 - Working with City departments on accessible communication and policies

- Collaborates with other departments and businesses on public accessibility
- Provides free technical assistance to design professionals and businesses submitting MA Architectural Access Board variance requests
- Maintains relationships with Harvard and MIT, consulting around accessibility
- Fields ADA grievances against the City
- Advocates for City policies
- Serves as a source of information/referral
- Acts as a conduit when people are having trouble accessing City services
- Advises on reasonable accommodations for Cambridge City employee

What the Staff Doesn't Do:

- We do not provide direct services, e.g.,
 - Helping people find PCAs
 - Finding housing
- We have no authoritative jurisdiction; we only give information
- We do not engage in individual advocacy, e.g.,
 - Showing up in court
 - Filling out forms
 - Providing legal help

Advisory Board's Purpose:

Ensuring that the voices of people with disabilities are included in City policy and practices.

What the Advisory Board Does:

- Provides feedback and input to City departments on policies and practices
- Provides feedback and input to the staff on effective community engagement
- Engages in special projects to make the City of Cambridge more welcoming and inclusive for people with disabilities (e.g., developing materials for new residents with disabilities)

What Individual Advisory Board Members Do:

- Alert staff about community needs regarding people with disabilities
- Assist with community outreach at community events as requested by staff

Support that the Staff Provides to the Advisory Board:

- Administrative Assistant (Maya)
 - Takes and distributes minutes
 - Sends out meeting invitations and agenda packet
- Provides CART services
- Orients new Advisory Board members
- Puts out the call for new Advisory Board members
- Assists Advisory Board members with interviews
- Relays the recommendations for new Advisory Board members to the City Manager
- Arranges retreat logistics
- Provides meeting space

Advisory Board Process:

- Special projects and working groups must be voted on by the Board and approved by the staff

- Commission representation at community events must be approved by the staff
- The Advisory Board meets at least ten times a year, every month except July or August (to be determined in May or June of each year), currently on the second Thursday of the month, from 5:30-7:00 PM. The Advisory Board meets virtually over Zoom
- Advisory Board members shall inform CCPD staff and the co-chairs if they will (or will not) be attending the meeting
- Advisory Board members are expected to:
 - Attend monthly meetings
 - Participate and volunteer for outreach and other community events in collaboration with staff
 - Promote the principles of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion

Leadership Roles:

- Chair
 - Sets the agenda for Advisory Board meetings
 - Presides over Advisory Board meetings
 - Facilitates the Advisory Board's decision-making process
 - Ensures members' active participation in meetings and on working groups
 - Works in partnership with the CCPD Director and Deputy Director to ensure smooth Advisory Board functioning
 - Delivers a report to the full Board at each meeting
 - Checks in with active working groups to make sure they have what they need and that they are keeping the full Advisory Board informed of their progress
- Secretary (functions as Vice Chair)
 - Assumes the role of Chair in the Chair's absence
 - Takes on tasks as requested by the Chair