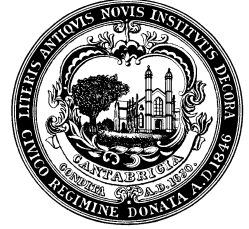


City of Cambridge

Commission for Persons with Disabilities

51 Inman Street · Cambridge, MA · 02139-1732

617-349-4692 voice · Relay via 711



JUNE 2026 MEETING AGENDA

Danielle Jones-McLaughlin
Chair

The Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) is holding a meeting online via Zoom on June 11, 2026 from 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Nieta Greene
Secretary

PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO JOIN BY 5:30 PM

Please keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking

Cecelia Cobb
Asherah Davis
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** (4 min)
2. **Announcements** (2 min) – CCPD Staff/Board
3. **Vote on Summer Recess** (3 min) – CCPD Staff/Board
The board will vote to take July or August off for summer recess.
4. **Approval of [May Minutes](#)** (2 min) – CCPD Board
See [pages 7-15](#) of this packet.
5. **Presentation: Accessibility in Affordable Housing** (20 min) – Chris Cotter, *Housing Director, Housing Department* & Maura Pensak, *Housing Liaison, City Manager's Office*
6. **[Working Groups Discussion](#)** (30 min) – CCPD Board
The Board will discuss working group expectations and determine group composition. See [pages 5-6](#) of this packet for the Board's list of approved working groups.
7. **Chair's Report** (5 min) – Danielle Jones-McLaughlin
8. **Public Works Update** (10 min) – Jim Wilcox, *Assistant Commissioner of Engineering, Department of Public Works*
9. **Staff Report** (10 min) – Rachel Tanenhaus
10. **Public Input** (4 min) – General Public
See [page 4 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://www.streamtext.net/player?event=Cambridge-17742>.
(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 either Thursday, July 9 or August 14 depending on the results of the Board's summer recess vote.

Members of the public: [See instructions on pages 3 & 4 on how to watch the CCPD meeting and provide public comment](#) via Zoom

Approved 9/10/2026

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, June 11, 2026 CCPD Meeting

Online via Zoom

Meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

Present:

Members: Danielle Jones-McLaughlin, Nieta Greene, Zach Solomons, Jim Wilcox, Cecelia Cobb, Erum Sattar

Absent: Emma Pan, Asherah Davis

Staff: Rachel Tanenhaus, Kate Thurman

Other: Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison of the Cambridge City Manager's Office; Chris Cotter, Housing Director of Housing Department

Member of public: Jared Henry

Announcements:

- Congrats to Maya on graduating with her master's degree last month!
- Board members should have received invitations to an event for Equity & Inclusion Board and Commission members on Monday, June 22 at 344 Broadway.

Vote on Summer Recess:

- The Board voted to take the month of August off for summer recess.

Approval of May 2026 Minutes:

- The May 2026 CCPD meeting minutes were approved. (7 in favor, 1 abstention).

Presentation on Accessibility in Cambridge Affordable Housing:

Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison of the Cambridge City Manager's Office and Chris Cotter, Housing Director of the Cambridge Housing Department delivered a presentation and facilitated a discussion on accessible and affordable housing in Cambridge:

- What is affordable housing?
 - Affordable housing programs let tenant pay no more than 30% of their income for rent.
 - Figuring out which programs to apply to and how to get into them is confusing. Some have no minimum requirement for income, some have one. Some adjust according to changes in income, some don't.
- The most familiar types of housing are mobile/tenant-based, public and project-based housing, which typically require individuals to apply to a housing authority or agency.
 - Housing authorities receive public funding from the federal and state governments to issue vouchers, develop and manage public housing and fund project-based housing.
- The four basic types of housing include:
 - Mobile/tenant-based housing:
 - Mobile/tenant-based housing is what people refer to as "Section 8".
 - Section 8 is the funding source, but people use the term to refer to a mobile voucher. When you receive a mobile voucher, you must find your own housing.
 - You can rent anywhere (e.g. a big building with many units, a unit in a "mom and pop" home, etc.). If you move, the voucher comes with you and can be applied to your new housing.

- You pay 30% of your income. For example, if rent for a unit is \$3,000 per month and 30% of your income is \$500, you would pay \$500 for the unit and the housing authority administering the voucher would pay \$2500.
 - Housing authorities have caps on what they will pay, so they will not allow you to find an apartment over a certain cost. Each housing authority has a “fair market” standard they allow.
 - The benefit of this option is that the voucher remains with you when you move, and your rent adjusts according to your income.
 - Public housing:
 - You apply through a housing authority and rent also adjusts according to your income.
 - If you decide to leave, your subsidy does not go with you.
 - Public housing developments are entirely subsidized and run by the housing authority.
 - In Cambridge, these developments include Newtowne Court, Washington Elms, Putnam Green, etc.
 - Project-based housing:
 - A housing authority or other entity funds particular units in a building. For example, there are project-based vouchers at 808 Memorial Drive.
 - You apply through a housing authority (such as the [Cambridge Housing Authority \(CHA\)](#)) and are added to a waitlist.
 - You pay 30% of income, and if your income drops your rent will be adjusted.
 - Income-based housing:
 - In Cambridge this is known as the [Inclusionary Housing program—you apply through the City](#).
 - Other types have a maximum income (usually 50-80% of Area Median Income (AMI)) but no minimum.
 - For income-based, there’s a minimum income requirement (it is 50% of AMI for our Inclusionary program).
 - The maximum income for the Inclusionary program is 120% of AMI.
 - Tax credit units through affordable providers also count as income based.
 - Income-based programs are flat rent programs, meaning your rent doesn’t adjust if you lose income.
- Almost every town in the state has a housing authority like CHA.
 - You can apply directly to the housing authorities in places you want to live, and there is also a centralized Section 8 waitlist and waitlists for housing in multiple cities/areas.
 - Reach out to Maura for more info (email: mpensak@cambridgema.gov).
- CHA has a senior/disabled housing program:
 - They have at least 8 buildings just for seniors and people with disabilities and project-based units in two other buildings. You can [apply to the senior/disabled housing program through CHA’s website](#).
 - You must either be a senior (58+ years old) or you can have a disability, which you don’t have to name. It’s just a check box.
 - When your name comes up, they’ll ask for documentation. They don’t need a lot of details, just medical documentation that you have a disability (mental or physical).
 - Not all units in senior/disabled housing are accessible.
 - If you have a disability, you are not restricted to applying to these buildings only; you can apply to other affordable housing as well.
 - Some units have accessible features built in already. These include features for sensory, mobility and hearing needs. You can ask for reasonable modifications in any kind of unit.
- Cecelia asked if the City has data on what percentage of applicants identify as having a disability.
 - CHA and housing authorities are not City entities, so we do not have access to their data directly but can ask them.
 - Chris said there isn’t a good data source available for all housing programs.

- CHA has dozens of buildings and there are lots of different lists. There are also nonprofit/private entities who operate affordable housing, so there is no centralized data.
- The Cambridge Housing Department does not ask for disability status or track it, but you should disclose if you want an accessible feature.
- Cecelia clarified that she wanted to know what proportion of demand there is for accessible units.
 - Chris said it depends on the type of disability and what features are required. Not all disabilities require features.
 - The Housing Department's waitlist for units built with accessibility features is currently in the double digits—between 10 and 20 people/families.
- Nieta asked if Chris would come back and hear from folks who are in the Inclusionary program.
 - The application isn't accessible and Nieta suggested looking at what modifications can be made to make the process easier for people with disabilities.
 - Chris says he's happy to come back and they gladly take accommodations requests, including in the application process.
 - The City doesn't control all the units, but we work with owners and managers to talk about reasonable accommodations.

Working Groups Discussion:

The CCPD Board reviewed the working groups approved at our April meeting and discussed expectations around group participation:

- Outreach and Engagement: Nieta went over the goals. No one in the meeting expressed interest; reach out to staff if you're interested.
- Cambridge Participatory Budget: Nieta and Danielle expressed interest.
- Civic Engagement: Danielle went over the purpose. Danielle and Nieta expressed interest.
- Rachel pointed out that other ideas can be brought up in the future, and if people think of things they want to work on, they can bring those things up and vote on them now or in the future.
- Also, people may not be volunteering if they don't know what's expected of them.
 - Erum agreed that she's new and she's not sure what's expected of her.
- Danielle noted that individual working groups may want to set their own boundaries and expectations.
- Cecelia said that we don't need to keep going over the same thing and we should honor what we decided previously.
- Rachel felt it was okay to both move on from what we've already decided and allow people to come up with ideas in the future. Danielle agreed and suggested we move on.

Chair's Report:

Danielle Jones-McLaughlin reported:

- None.

Public Works Report:

Jim Wilcox reported:

- Jim reported on the success of our Broadway quick build project to implement separated bike lanes as part of the Cycling Safety Ordinance work:
 - Most of the project is quick build and involves repaving roadways and spot sidewalk repairs, but the high school and library will also get bus boarding islands.
 - Between Prospect and Inman was brick and in bad condition prior to the quick build project.



- The default is to replace materials in kind, but we give property owners a choice in front of their property.
 - If they want to go from brick to concrete, there is no extra cost. If they have concrete and want brick, that costs the property owner \$10-12K, so most property owners do not choose brick sidewalks.
 - It's not a great policy because varying sidewalk materials in the same block causes accessibility issues for pedestrians. On Broadway, the Department of Public Works (DPW) talked to property owners about implementing a concrete sidewalk with brick bordering to preserve accessibility.
- Jim used 344 Broadway as an example.
 - The brick band has street furniture (street tree, bike rack, hydrants, parking meters, and trash receptacles).
 - Has the historic feel but the accessible concrete sidewalk.
- Five property owners on the block of Broadway between Prospect and Inman agreed to implement the concrete sidewalk with brick band, replacing the previous brick paving.



- Erum thanked Jim and DPW for developing this elegant solution.
- Jim wants to work with City Council to change our policy related to brick sidewalks.
- Rachel and Danielle thanked Jim.

Staff Report

Rachel Tanenhaus reported:

- Last month Rachel announced the City would put on a water safety event geared towards children with disabilities such as autism and ADHD, who are at higher risk of drowning. The event provided accessible coaching for children and their families/caregivers to help them stay safe in the pool and around water.

- An organization called Swim Angelfish worked with the Cambridge Recreation Department and the Middlesex County District Attorney's office, to set up the workshop at War Memorial Pool.
- 15-20 families attended the event.
- Swim Angelfish believes that every child can learn to be in the water safely. With climate change causing rising temperatures, this is more important than ever as water helps people stay cool.
- Danielle expressed thanks for the program and hopes that these workshops can continue.
- The federal government has discussed halting investigation into housing discrimination cases involving emotional support animals (ESAs), even though they are covered under the Fair Housing Act (FHA).
 - ESAs are not covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) but are covered by the FHA and must be allowed in most forms of housing.
 - Some people with ESAs are feeling concerned about whether their rights will be protected.
 - Rachel emphasized that the laws have not changed on a state or City level, so Cambridge residents' rights have not changed.
 - If someone has an ESA-related discrimination complaint, they may be more successful if they go to their local human rights offices to have their complaint heard rather than filing a federal complaint.
 - CCPD will work with the Cambridge Human Rights Commission (CHRC) to create materials informing Cambridge residents that their ESA rights are still protected.
 - Kate added that the CHRC used to refer people with ESA-related complaints to the Boston Fair Housing Office but will now do the investigation themselves because there is protection for ESAs under the City of Cambridge ordinance.
 - Nieta asked whether there is still protection under state laws.
 - Rachel said yes, but some state housing offices (such as Massachusetts) are set up to do intakes for complaints to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
 - Nieta suggested the Board write a letter to the Massachusetts housing office requesting they investigate ESA-related housing complaints themselves rather than rely on the federal government.
 - Rachel said this announcement from the federal government came recently, so it is unclear how the state housing office is responding just yet and that it is possible they will make a statement. We are not privy to how the state will respond, but we know the City is ready to step in to protect people's rights.
- Rachel thanked everyone for filling out the Heat Justice survey and mentioned that the City received hundreds of responses, including many from people with disabilities.
- If people have already taken the [Community Access Monitor \(CAM\) training from the Massachusetts Office on Disability \(MOD\)](#), MOD is offering an Advanced CAM training opportunity on July 30 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. on Zoom (it is free!).
 - You can ask Rachel or MOD for more information.
 - CAM helps educate community members on how to identify accessible and inaccessible infrastructure in their communities and how to respond to accessibility issues and advocate for improvements.

Public Comment:

None.

Meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rachel Tanenhaus

June 11, 2026 CCPD Board Working Groups Discussion Guide

Discussion Goals

- CCPD Board members will officially select the working groups they will participate in.
- Working group members will agree on meeting frequency, attendance, and meeting structure.

Discussion Agenda

- Board members review the approved working group list (see below) and commit to participating in the groups that interest them.
- Board members create a list of general expectations for working groups:
 - How frequently should groups meet?
 - Will some groups meet less frequently or require only seasonal participation?
 - What expectations will group members have around attendance?
 - How will groups meet and communicate?
 - What technologies will they require? Will they offer hybrid or in-person meetings?
 - How will they still in contact outside of meetings—will they use email threads or chat apps?
 - How will meetings be structured?
 - Who will facilitate each meeting, or will group members take turns?
 - How will group members set agendas?
 - How long will meetings last?
 - What support do Board members need from staff? (*Examples: Meeting technology or space, meeting format suggestions, feedback*)

Board Working Groups List

(approved at 5/14/2026 CCPD Board meeting):

- **Outreach and Engagement Group**
 - Focuses on improving visibility of CCPD among people with disabilities in Cambridge communities
 - Includes resource materials project to develop directories of housing providers and other resources for new Cambridge residents with disabilities and their families
 - **Interested board members:** Asherah
- **Participatory Budget Group**
 - Explores how to increase the Cambridge disability community's participation in the PB process
 - Develops and/or advises on accessibility-related PB projects
 - **Interested board members:** Nieta, Danielle, Cecelia
- **Civic Engagement Group**
 - Organizes CCPD board representation at public forums and policy-related engagement opportunities
 - Attends and reports back on meetings/events on topics affecting the disability community
 - **Interested board members:** Danielle, Nieta, Erum