Thursday, September 17, 2026
Citywide Senior Center
806 Mass Avenue, Cambridge, MA

Summary of Conversation Topics

- Family Policy Council Ordinance
- Cambridge Public Schools District Plan

Chair ~~Sumbul Siddiqui~~ Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler
Members: Meagan Albright, Tina Alu, Johanny Castillo, Joseph Corazzini, ~~Caitlin Dube~~, Lida Griffins, Michelle Godfrey, ~~Tabithlee Howard~~, Kieu Anh Huynh, ~~Michelle Lower~~, Kam Maali, Larisa Mendez-Penate, Dave Murphy, Matt Nelson, Geeta Pradhan, Bridget Rodriguez, ~~Tracy Rose Tynes~~, Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler, Liz Stapleton, Tagesech Wabeto, David Weinstein, ~~Yoyo Yau~~

Executive Director: Nancy Tauber
Notetaker: Helene Berhe
CYC Coordinator: Izzy Schpeiser
CYC Members: Reyyan Elfiky , Helene Berhe, Sujay Ray, Avi Dupee, Audrey Vautier
Guests: Pauline Wells, Nina Nolan, Connor Epsteinkraus, Heather Francis, John Gali, Nora Ismail

5:30 Welcome and Introductions

- Family Policy Council Business
    - Approval of May, 2026 Minutes
        - PASSES: Unanimously
- Announcements
    - The Family Policy Council is the Advisory Council for The Center for Families, the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grantee.
    - Since Maria McCauley is now serving as the President of the American Library Association, Meagan Albright will be representing her this year.
    - CYC is going to the National League of Conference in Nashville this year - November 17-21.
    - Agenda for Children OST 25th Anniversary Celebration - October 22. All invited.

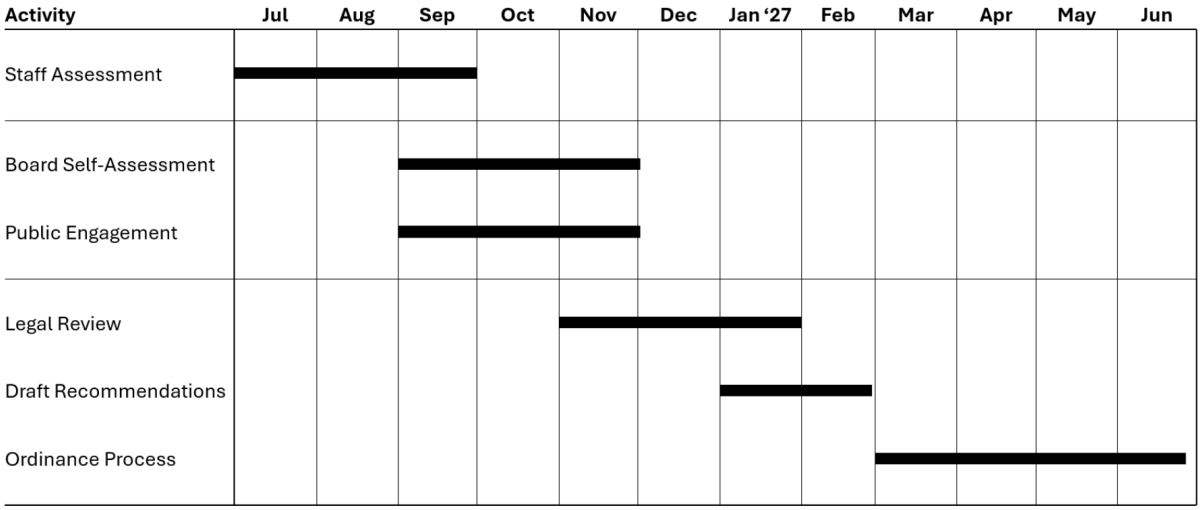
- CEOC is working with the City and Cambridge Community Foundation to help support people impacted by SNAP and Mass Health changes.

City of Cambridge Multi-Member Bodies Ordinance Review and Modernization Initiative

Phase 1:

- American Freedmen Commission
- Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities
- Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship
- Commission on the Status of Women
- **Family Policy Council**
- Human Rights Commission
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus Commission
- Peace Commission
- Police Review and Advisory Board Go over ordinance review process

Timeline



Step 1: Function and Purpose & Powers and Duties

Link to Family Policy Council Ordinance:
https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE_CH2.84COCOCHYOFAALKNKICO

Original Ordinance

2.84.020 - Function and purpose

The Family Policy Council will direct a comprehensive local response to the needs of children, their families and other caregivers, in accordance with the guiding principles set forth in the

Children, Youth and Family Policy Plan. These principles refer to the Original Children, Youth, and Family Plan)

- To promote services and other activities that are preventive rather than reactive;
- To promote services and other activities that are coordinated rather than fragmented, and that result in improved accessibility;
- To encourage innovative responses to needs;
- To generate activities that create opportunities for all children, their families, and other caregivers;
- To support families, their choices, and their strengths, recognizing diversity and the many different choices that families make about how to bring up happy and healthy children;
- To promote services and other activities that are comprehensive, oriented to the needs of children and families seen as whole people.

Original Ordinance

2.84.070 - Powers and duties.

The powers and duties of the Council shall include the following:

- Recommend children, youth and family policy to the City Manager, the City Council, the School Committee and other appropriate committees;
- Review and make recommendations regarding the City's allocation of resources affecting children, youth and families to the City Manager and other appropriate officials;
- Act as a catalyst in mobilizing and coordinating other efforts within the City aimed at responding to the needs of children, youth and families;
- Act as a clearinghouse for efforts within the City aimed at responding to the needs of children, youth and families;
- Act as an advocate with regard to State and federal policies which impact on the City's children, youth and families;
- Mobilize and coordinate resources available to Council Members and organizations they may represent to develop joint projects to respond to the needs of children, youth and families;
- Enlist the cooperation of various racial, religious and ethnic groups, civic and community organizations, labor organizations, fraternal and benevolent organizations, and other groups and organizations to further the intent and purposes of this chapter;
- Raise and direct funds to support the projects and priorities of the Council and accept money, gifts and services for these purposes;
- Encourage youth input through the creation of specific opportunities for youth to provide their perspectives on their lives, community and issues facing them.

Suggested Changes	
Function and Purpose	**Powers and Duties**
Support and strengthen a coordinated community response to the needs of children, youth, and families in Cambridge.	**Identify community needs and opportunities** by engaging children, youth, families, and other community members; using available data and information; and building on existing efforts. **Promote accessible, coordinated, and comprehensive services, resources, and opportunities** that respond to the diverse needs of Cambridge families.
Foster collaboration and shared responsibility among the City, schools, community organizations, and other partners to advance the well-being of children, youth, and families.	**Share information and facilitate connections** among organizations, initiatives, and community partners, including the sharing of promising practices. **Promote coordination and partnerships** among City departments, schools, nonprofit and community organizations, and other partners serving children, youth, and families.
Promote a community in which all children, youth, and families can thrive.	**Recommend and advocate for** policies, programs, services, investments, and other actions that advance equity and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.
Center the perspectives and experiences of young people and engage community members in ways that reflect the diversity of Cambridge.	**Create meaningful and ongoing opportunities for young people to share their perspectives, inform decisions, and help shape priorities** affecting their lives and communities. **Use the knowledge, experience, relationships, and resources of Family Policy Council members and community partners** to strengthen efforts benefiting children, youth, and families.

Small Group discussion regarding Function/Purpose and Duties/Powers
Each person answers the following question: What is something fun you did this summer?
Questions:

- Is there anything you would add, delete, or change?
- Do you have any questions?

Discussion and Questions

Group 1

- FPC is a body of service that has the capacity to serve as a hub and works behind the scenes to make things happen.
- Questions
    - Have we ever done this? Should we: Make recommendations about allocation of resources? Advocate for federal and state policy? Raise funds?
- Coordination
    - Function - Add prevention and innovation
    - Powers - Add promote the success of other projects and act as a conduit between projects
- Collaboration
    - Make connections to move things forward.
    - Powers - Add “break down silos” to Promote coordination and partnerships…
- Membership -Individuals with lived experience vs Representatives of people with lived experience.
- Amplify voices of young people to turn into action

Group 2

- Questions
    - How can FPC have more “teeth?”
- Make a clear proactive opening statement of purpose
- Make youth voice and empowerment a more central part of the function.
- Include
    - Monitoring and documenting community needs
    - Anticipate/identify problems and needs
- Coordination
    - Powers
        - Add to Identify needs and opps
            - Prevention language back
            - Potential future emergent problems

Group 3

- Keep original purpose statement
- Should we add back advocacy with state and federal policies?
- Collaboration
    - Add leveraging resources

    - Collaborate with community organizations (i.e., transportation and developers)
    - Change “Promote” to “Facilitate” coordination and partnership among…
- Thrive
    - Change purpose to - Recommend, advocate, and implement a community in which all children, youth, and families thrive.
    - Power - Add a review in which all programs can share changes that involve our community to gain feedback from FPC especially when it pertains to youth.
- Engagement
    - Purpose - Youth, family, law enforcement, transportation, developers, individuals, nonprofit leaders, cycle people in and out to learn and hear perspectives.

Group 4

- All sounds great, but how are we doing it? Some things that have happened have ended.
- Make examples more specific
- Coordination
    - Purpose - How do we ensure we share with each other and out into the community?
    - Identify community needs and opps
        - Do we need to list “Children”?
        - Does “families” include all kinds of households?
    - Share information directly with students - doesn’t have to be impactful, the process of presenting is important in itself.
- Collaboration
    - Share info - what are promising practices?
    - Don’t just rely on digital sharing of info.
    - Keep track of efforts from local and national resources
- Thrive
    - So many resources but still some kids falling through cracks.
    - Explain the why of services to show why its important - especially addressing different cultures.
- Engagement
    - Surveys can be done, but doesn’t always get honest replies
    - Ask young people
    - Focus groups - incentives
    - CDD Youth Outreach Worker
    - Make barriers as low as possible
    - Add faith-based

Group 5

- Coordination
    - Spot on
    - Liked reference to using available data - could be elevated
    - Need and opportunity are 2 separate things.
- Collaboration
    - Move to the top of the list
    - Share info - add youth organizations
    - Promote coordination - add
        - Voice of children
        - Youth groups
        - Children, youth, and young adults
- Thrive
    - Change to Wellbeing - or change the others (Coordinate, Collaborate, Thrive, Engage)
    - Power - add joy - advance equity, joy, and improve outcomes…
    - Youth attracted to fun activities. Need to highlight fun to attract kids vs. workshops
- Engagement -
    - Noticed that really centers youth voice; maybe because that is what is missing most.
    - Edit - Create meaningful and ongoing **engagement** opportunities for young people **and greater community** to share their perspectives, inform decisions, and help shape priorities affecting their lives and communities.

Group Discussion

- The language of identifying community needs and opportunities (not the same thing)
- Change “thrive” to “wellbeing”
- Adding in the voices of young people in the Function and Purpose of Collaboration.
- Collaboration being central, council is a body of service that works behind the scenes.
- More specifics necessary (involving youth, reducing barriers for young people’s voices)
- How are we defining “promising practices?”
- Add back - “prevention”, “monitoring”, “proactive”, and “prevention”
    - Could be a 5th function
- Include an opening statement at the beginning of Function and Purpose
- Make sure language is not passive. Use “facilitate and change”
- Create ways to get feedback from others who are not part of the Family Policy

Council.

Cambridge Public Schools District Plan

Superintendent Murphy and Heather Francis

9.17.26 Strategic Planning Feedback, Family Policy Council

Discussion Questions

For each priority area:

1. What would make the greatest difference for **students**?
2. What **resonates**?
3. What feels most important for **students** and **families**?
4. What is **missing** or needs greater **emphasis**?

Feedback

Priority 1: Students access equitable, engaging, standards-based instruction
What resonates

- Strong support for early literacy, with interest in sustaining the focus beyond the earliest grades.
- Importance of a shared definition of high-quality, rigorous grade-level instruction.
- Support for strong curriculum, data use, and aligned instructional systems.
- Interest in expanding advanced coursework and career/technical pathways, particularly at the high school level.
- Recognition that students need access to arts, culture, and other engaging learning experiences.
- WIN/flex time and other structures that provide students with differentiated support are valued.

Questions/areas for greater emphasis

- Clarify what “student well-being” means and ensure the priority addresses the whole child, including SEL, emotional support, and holistic student needs.
- Clarify what is meant by “rigorous” instruction and ensure rigor is appropriate and accessible for all students.
- Strengthen attention to students with disabilities, including whether students are genuinely accessing strong instruction rather than simply being present in the curriculum.
- Give greater emphasis to multilingual learners.
- Continue literacy development beyond early literacy, including media literacy.
- Strengthen technical/career pathways and opportunities at the high school level.
- Consider the role of out-of-school time (OST) as an instructional partner aligned

to standards.
- Ensure students understand how they are being assessed.
- Make district systems and resources easier for educators and families to navigate.

Priority 2: Staff are effective and thrive
What resonates
- Peer support, mentoring, coaching, and professional learning.
- District and school leadership supporting educators continued growth.
- Attention to onboarding and support for new educators and leaders.

Questions / areas for greater emphasis
- Strengthen peer support and mentoring, including how mentoring and longevity are supported.
- Incorporate youth/student voice into staff feedback.
- Ensure professional learning is relevant and connected to educators actual work and needs.
- Connect staff learning to academic priorities while retaining attention to students' broader needs.
- Clarify how the district will measure whether staff are actually thriving, not simply participating in professional learning.

Priority 3: Families are engaged
What resonates
- The emphasis on trusted relationships between schools and families.
- Providing families with information about student progress and concrete ways to support learning at home.
- Partnerships with community organizations.
- Reducing chronic absenteeism through caregiver and community partnerships.

Questions / areas for greater emphasis
- Shift from simply communicating with families toward meaningfully involving them.
- Ask families directly: “What do you need to support your student?”
- Make family engagement practices more consistent across schools; staff need systems, tools, and preparation to engage families effectively.
- Consider additional community liaison capacity and fuller use of existing community partnership structures.
- Ensure engagement opportunities are accessible and comfortable for families rather than expecting families to navigate school-created systems.
- Recognize that families may be highly engaged with their children even when they are less engaged with the school itself; avoid deficit assumptions.

- Clarify what meaningful family engagement looks like and how participation will make a difference, especially given families limited time.
- Reconsider how chronic absenteeism is defined and addressed, particularly medical/legal absences and students with substantial non-medical absences.
- Consider stronger connections between families and individual staff rather than relying predominantly on digital communication.

Priority 4: Organization is coherent

- Trusting relationships should be part of organizational coherence.
    - Include the high school explicitly in thinking about coherence.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, decision-making, and communication across central
- office and schools.
- Strengthen cross-department collaboration so schools experience coordinated rather than fragmented support.
- Make the connection between district priorities and the allocation of resources and support visible.
- Consider longer-term planning for buildings, grade configurations, feeder patterns, schedules, enrollment, and instructional needs.

Cross-Cutting Messages

1. Broaden the conception of student success. Participants want academic rigor and achievement paired more explicitly with well-being, SEL, belonging, and whole-child supports.
2. Make “for all students” more concrete. There are repeated questions about students with disabilities, multilingual learners, struggling students, and students who need advanced opportunities.
3. Move family engagement from communication to partnership. Families should have meaningful roles, and schools need stronger systems and capacity to support that partnership.
4. Make implementation clearer. Participants are asking what the priorities will actually look like, who is responsible, what systems will support the work, and how success will be measured.
5. Name the ecosystem around instruction. OST/community partners, families, SEL supports, staff learning, and organizational structures are viewed as important contributors to student learning, not peripheral supports.

Next steps

- Next meeting - Thursday, October 29 (5:15-7:15) at Citywide Senior Center

Adjourn 7:15