



City of Cambridge

POR 2026-08
FIRST IN COUNCIL
January 26, 2026

COUNCILLOR ZUSY
COUNCILLOR NOLAN
COUNCILLOR SOBRINHO-WHEELER
VICE MAYOR AZEEM

WHEREAS: Access to the internet, a modern utility, is a vital part of everyday life and essential for the citizens of Cambridge; and

WHEREAS: In 2014 the City formed a Broadband Task Force to work on issues of internet access and evaluate the city's internet infrastructure with a final report delivered in 2016 with recommendations for future actions including a municipal broadband feasibility study and ways to ensure digital equity; and

WHEREAS: The city completed a citywide comprehensive digital equity study in 2021 which was a result of City Council actions and was meant to serve as a foundation for the city's future digital equity and broadband initiatives; and

WHEREAS: In 2023 the City further published a report on Municipal Broadband Feasibility & Business Model Options; and

WHEREAS: In February 2025, the Council also passed Policy Order #13 requesting the City Manager to create a plan with a schedule and milestones to move forward the creation of a Municipal Broadband Network; and

WHEREAS: It is critical that we ensure that underserved audiences have internet access, which is very expensive; and

WHEREAS: To achieve this, over the past almost decade, the city has partnered with many to implement internet access programs; and

WHEREAS: In 2016, MIT, Google, Boston Properties, the City of Cambridge, and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA), established a free Wi-Fi network at Newtowne Court and Washington Elms public housing—this continues to function; and

WHEREAS: In December 2024, with \$1.1m of ARPA funds, Cambridge funded a three-year test program between Starry and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) to provide internet access to the residents of the Frank J. Manning, Washington Elms and Newtowne Court apartments; and

WHEREAS: In 2022, the CHA launched a computer training program for senior residents at a few CHA properties, including Manning apartments, offering free chromebooks, funded by Google; and

- WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge also provides public Wi-Fi in our schools, libraries and public buildings the Cambridge Public Library offers a Digital Equity Initiative, offering free tech classes, help and take out technology and CCTV, with the City, offers a Digital Navigator Program offering free laptops, hotspots and essential tech training; and
- WHEREAS: The Cambridge Public Library just received a grant of \$100,000 to further fund their digital navigator program and equipment to provide greater internet access; now therefore be it
- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the appropriate departments to review the city's digital equity work to date, including the study's recommendations and all steps taken since the study conclusion in order to update the evaluation of existing internet access programs, assessing whether residents' digital needs are or could be better provided for and to propose how we can better meet their needs and to report back to the Council by June 2026 on internet access programs; and be it further
- ORDERED: That this evaluation include exploration of the federal [USAC Lifeline](#) and [BEAD](#) programs; and
- ORDERED: Despite near-term financial challenges, the City Manager is hereby requested to retain Municipal Broadband in capital project planning for the coming years.

In City Council February 9, 2026.

Adopted as Amended by a ye and nay vote:-

Yeas 9; Nays 0; Absent 0.

Attest:- Paula M. Crane, Interim City Clerk

A true copy;



ATTEST:-

Paula M. Crane
Interim City Clerk