



June 30, 2022

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Approval of the City of Cambridge Election Commission's request for the use of Six District School Buildings as Polling Locations Through November 2024

Recommendation: That the School Committee approve the City of Cambridge Election Commission's request for the use of six district school buildings as polling locations for through November 2024.

Description: The City of Cambridge Election Commission has requested the use of the following six district school buildings to be used as polling locations through November 2024:

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Putnam Avenue Upper School
- Morse School
- Cambridge Rindge & Latin School
- Baldwin School
- Graham & Parks Schools
- Peabody School

The tentative election schedule includes:

Primary Elections-September 6, 2022

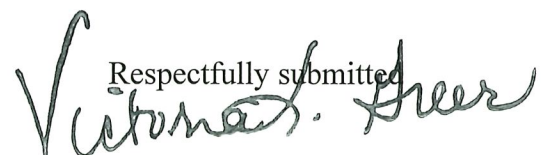
State Elections-November 8, 2022

Municipal Elections: November 7, 2023

Primary Elections: September 2024

Presidential/State Elections: November 5, 2024

Supporting Data: Attached request from the City of Cambridge Election Commission.

Respectfully submitted


Victoria L. Greer PhD
Superintendent of Schools



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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June 28, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui and Dr. Victoria Greer, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Tanya L. Ford-Crump, Executive Director, Cambridge Election Commission

RE: **Request to Designate Polling Locations**

The Board of Election Commissioners (the Election Commission) respectfully requests use of the following schools as polling locations on election days through November 2024: (Please see Exhibit 1 – Specific Voting Location at Each School).

1. Martin Luther King or Putnam Ave. Upper School
2. Morse School
3. Cambridge Rindge and Latin School
4. Baldwin School
5. Graham and Parks School
6. Peabody School

Four of these schools, Morse School, Baldwin School, Graham and Parks Schools, and Peabody School, have been designated polling locations in Cambridge for decades. Starting in 2020, the Martin Luther King School and Cambridge Rindge and Latin School served as polling locations to replace four that the City was prohibited from using due to COVID-19, including a nursing home and hospital. These six school buildings accommodate polling locations for 11 precincts and 2 sub-precincts, which serve approximately **23,303** registered voters. **This represents 34% of all registered voters in Cambridge.** (Please see Exhibit 2 – Number of Registered Voters Near School Polling Places).

These schools have historically been employed in past elections, making them familiar to the City's voters. These schools are prominent civic landmarks which are familiar to voters in their neighborhoods. The six schools are centrally situated where voters live, reducing travel distance and making voting more convenient. These six schools are all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, ensuring equal access for voters with physical limitations. These schools contain spaces large enough to accommodate voters without generating long lines, resulting in a quicker and more efficient voting experience.

The Election Commission's request to designate these six schools as polling locations is further driven by the difficult circumstances caused by re-precincting. Due to the delay in the issuance of U.S. Census data caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the state legislature's drawing of district lines in 2021 before the completion of re-precincting, certain of the City's precincts needed to be divided into sub-precincts. As a result, Cambridge and many other municipalities in the Commonwealth are required to set up new polling locations to accommodate these sub-precincts for state elections over the following decade. This sub-precincting makes establishing the six schools as polling locations through November 2024 even more important, as voters must be educated as soon as possible on where they will be voting before the next upcoming election on September 6, 2022.

Establishing these six schools as polling locations has the added benefit of having pre-established security plans. The Election Commission and its Executive Director worked collaboratively in 2021 with the School Committee to address concerns with using the schools as polling locations. In close cooperation with the Police Department, the Executive Director of the Election Commission established comprehensive Operations Security Plans for the schools. Additionally, the Police Department increased the number of police officers assigned to each school over the past several years, so that two or more officers are now assigned at school polling places to provide additional security on Election Day. The Election Commission's commitment to ensuring the safety of the City's students, voters, poll workers, and the public at school polling locations is absolute. The Election Commission will be responsive to any requests to make it easier for the schools to host elections and will continue to implement policies to improve security on Election Day.

On November 29, 2021, a joint roundtable was held with the City Council, School Committee, City Manager and Board of Election Commissioners "to discuss the past election, including but not limited to new practices and polling locations in Cambridge". During that discussion, the City Council suggested creating a working group to help locate spaces to be used as polling places in the city and to plan further discussion on the use of schools as polling places. The Election Commission chair subsequently contacted members of the City Council and School Committee to explore creating a working group.

However, it is not feasible to form a working group to evaluate polling locations at this time given the close proximity to the upcoming state elections. The Massachusetts State Primary will be held on Tuesday, September 6, 2022. The Election Commission needs time to undertake public outreach and voter notification of the changes to their wards, precincts, and polling places. In addition, forming a working group to find new polling locations could take months, especially as the City Council would be required to evaluate and report on whether the new locations would have a disparate adverse impact on access to the polls on the basis of race, national origin, disability, income, or age. It often takes the Election Commission weeks to research potential buildings, contact building owners, evaluate the buildings' accessibility and submit a written report to the City Council for review.

The six schools proposed to be used for polling locations have already been evaluated by the Election Commission, which has determined that they meet the required criteria necessary to legally serve as polling locations. While the Election Commission remains desirous of establishing a working group, it believes that at this point the priority should be confirming that these schools can be used as polling locations for the upcoming elections.

For the reasons presented, the Election Commission requests that the six schools be approved for use as polling locations through November 2024 in order to assure that the City may hold fair, accessible, and safe elections.

Sincerely,

Tanya L. Ford-Crump

Tanya L. Ford-Crump

Executive Director, Cambridge Election Commission

EXHIBIT #1

Specific Voting Location in Each School

Name of School	Notes about Location
Martin Luther King School / Putnam Ave Upper School 102 Putnam Avenue, Playground Gym Entrance	The City used the Putnam Ave Upper School Gym during the September 2020, November 2020, November 2021 and December 2021 elections. In January 2022, the City used the Martin Luther King School Gym upon request from the Putnam Ave Upper School to switch. The Election Commission is open to using either gym but request that the same gym be designated as a polling location in every future election to avoid voter confusion. Both gyms are accessed via the playground gym entrance.
Morse School 40 Granite Street, Main Entrance	The City used the lobby of the Morse School for many years. In 2020, the City used the gym for when school was closed. In 2021, the polling location was switched back to the lobby at the principal's request.
Cambridge Rindge and Latin School 459 Broadway, Media Cafeteria, Cambridge Street Entrance	In 2020, the polling location was in the cafeteria with voter access through the main entrance. In 2021, the polling location switched to the Media Cafeteria, with voters entering from the Cambridge Street entrance.
Baldwin School Community Floor, 28 Sacramento Street Entrance	Voters access the polling location from entrance to voting area via elevator or stairs. Extra poll workers and police officers present to assist elderly and handicap voters.
Graham and Parks School 44 Linnaean Street, Playground Entrance	Voters access the gym through the playground entrance.
Peabody School Gym 70 Rindge Avenue, Rear Entrance	Voters enter directly into the gym from the rear entrance

EXHIBIT #2 - Number of Registered Voters near School Polling Locations as of March 31, 2022

Ward	Precinct	Total Voters	School Nme			
4	01	2559	Morse School	Totals By School:		
4	03	2449	MLK		Morse School	4685
5	03	2126	Morse School		MLK	3315
6	02	1488	CRLS		CRLS	4034
6	03	2546	CRLS		Baldwin	3903
7	01	2189	Baldwin		Graham & Parks	4695
7	02	1668	Baldwin		Peabody School	2671
7	02A	46	Baldwin		Total:	23,303.00
8	01	1996	Graham & Parks			
8	03	866	MLK			
10	01	1680	Peabody School			
10	01A	991	Peabody School			
10	02	2699	Graham & Parks			
Total:		23,303.00			34% of registered voters	