RESIDENT SERVICES AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
Wednesday, October 7, 2026 @ 6:00pm

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Mullane called the meeting to order and requested the Clerk call the roll. Present were Chair Mullane, Councilor Tseng, and Councilor Callahan. Councilor Leming was absent. A quorum having been established, the Committee proceeded with the agenda. Councilor Scarpelli later joined the meeting via Zoom.

24-354 - Resolution to Publish City Council Newsletter

Chair Mullane noted that the summer edition of the Newsletter would be distributed shortly, and that Councilor Tseng is working on the Newsletter for the September meeting which will be distributed next month.

26-024 – Resolution to Schedule Neighborhood Ward Meetings Hosted by City Council

Chair Mullane provided a summary of the Ward 1 meeting that was held on September 23rd. She stated that it was attended by approximately 30 people in person, and that 7 people were on Zoom. Top issues raised by the residents included:

- Noise, in particular noise on Otis Street, and understanding the City's current noise ordinance and ways to enhance it
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety, including specific streets and sidewalks
- Traffic Calming, including targeted streets and areas that could use traffic calming measures
- City Website, including navigating the site and who is responsible for maintaining the content
- Wellington Transformation Study

Councilor Tseng expressed that the meeting went well and they received positive feedback from residents who said they felt heard. He noted there were issues with people waiting for an opportunity to speak, and he suggested that index cards could be distributed at future meetings to allow people to write out the topics they would like to discuss at the start of the meeting.

Chair Mullane said a follow up email was sent to everyone who signed up at the meeting. She is also working with Medford Community Media to have the video of the meeting made accessible. She also discussed ways to connect individuals with different projects and issues they expressed interest in.

Chair Mullane reviewed ideas for improvements to future meetings including:

- Better communication and outreach
- Adjustments to microphone use to ensure Zoom participants are able to hear all speakers
- Offering childcare services
- Coordinating the meeting schedule with Back-to-School nights

Chair Mullane then reviewed logistics for coordinating future meetings.

The following is the proposed schedule for future meetings:

Month	Ward	Location	Councilor #1	Councilor #2
January	4	Tufts	Mullane	Scarpelli
February	7	McGlynn	Tseng	Leming
March	6	Medford Library	Callahan	Lazzaro
April	3	Medford High School	Bears	Lazzaro
May	8	Medford City Hall	Leming	Bears

26-138 - Resolution to Update the Noise Ordinance

Chair Mullane invited Councilor Tseng to provide a summary of his work on the proposed Noise Ordinance.

Councilor Tseng reviewed his presentation titled "Updating Medford's Noise Ordinance," a copy of which is attached hereto.

Councilor Scarpelli thanked Councilor Tseng for his work. He stated that it was important to gather input from our business districts and our residents. He also recommended that the enforcement of the ordinance be discussed at a Committee of the Whole meeting, and that the enforcement provisions be developed in partnership with the Building Department, the Treasurer's Office, the Assessor's Office, and legal counsel.

Councilor Callahan also thanked Council Tseng for his work. She discussed the importance of engaging with residents and gathering public input and suggested the ordinance could be discussed at future Ward Meetings.

Chair Mullane discussed distributing a public survey and will prepare a draft of survey questions for discussion at the Committee's next meeting. She also suggested working with the Police Chief, the Building Commissioner, and the Parking Department.

Motion by Councilor Callahan to keep the paper in committee, and to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Tseng. Approved on a roll call vote of four in favor, zero opposed, one absent (Councilor Leming).

26-169 - Resolution to Improve the City's Website

Resolution:

WHEREAS, medfordma.org is the primary digital interface between City government and Medford's residents, businesses, and visitors; and

WHEREAS, a review of the site reveals outdated content, navigation mismatching residents' needs, limited language access, and a gap in online services compared to peers; now, therefore:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Committee solicit public input on website improvements, invite the Communications Office and IT Department to present on current capabilities and constraints, and report back with recommendations.

Discussion:

Chair Mullane invited Councilor Tseng to provide a summary of his review of the City's website.

Councilor Tseng reviewed his presentation titled "medfordma.org Website Review," a copy of which is attached hereto.

Chair Mullane stated she had heard numerous times at the Ward Meeting that residents were having difficulty navigating the website. She emphasized the importance of updating the calendar, particularly for the meetings for the High School Building Committee, to ensure residents are aware of those meetings.

Chair Mullane said she would invite the City's Communications Team to attend the Committee's next meeting to review the issues raised.

Motion by Councilor Callahan to keep the paper in committee, and to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Tseng. Approved on a roll call vote of four in favor, zero opposed, one absent (Councilor Leming).

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurel Siegel
City Clerk

RESIDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE · FIRST REVIEW

Updating Medford's Noise Ordinance

A walkthrough of the draft amendment to Chapter 38, Sec. 38-34 (Noise Control), aligned Control), aligned with Somerville's ordinance

Councilor Justin Tseng · October 7, 2026

AT A GLANCE

What the draft does

A clear general rule

No "noise disturbance" anywhere in the city, judged by a reasonable-person test and 11 listed factors.

17 specific disturbances

Construction, power tools, alarms, horns, loudspeakers, late-loudspeakers, late-night music, vibration and more.

Measurable decibel limits

Two alternative tables for the committee to choose between: Option A or Option B.

A simple penalty schedule

Warning, then $100, then $300 for most violations. Construction fines start at $100.

STRUCTURE

How the ordinance is organized

Part	Topic	What it does
(a)	Purpose & scope	Targets preventable, unnecessary noise, not ordinary city life
(b)	Definitions	20 terms, including "noise disturbance" and zoning areas
(c)	General rule & list	The core prohibition, 11 factors, 17 listed disturbances
(d)	Decibel limits	Policy choice: Option A or Option B
(e)	Enforcement	Who enforces, and the fine schedule
(f)–(g)	Severability; effective date	Takes effect on passage and publication

THE GENERAL RULE · (B) AND (C)

No one may cause a "noise disturbance"

A sound is a disturbance if it…

1. Endangers or injures anyone's health or safety
2. Disturbs a reasonable person of ordinary sensitivities
3. Is specifically listed in the ordinance
4. Exceeds a decibel limit in subsection (d)

Not meant to regulate "the usual and customary noise incidental to urban life."

Factors officials may weigh

- Loudness
- Time of day
- Duration
- Recurring or constant
- Usual or unusual
- Natural or not
- Background noise
- Near sleeping areas
- Population density
- Zoning district
- Public or capital project

TIME-OF-DAY RULES · (C)

When noisy activities are allowed

Activity	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays & holidays
Ordinary construction	7 a.m.–7 p.m.	9 a.m.–7 p.m.	Not allowed
High-impact construction (jackhammers, pile drivers, blasting, saws)	7 a.m.–5 p.m.	Not allowed	Not allowed
Outdoor power & yard tools (residential)	7 a.m.–9 p.m.	9 a.m.–9 p.m.	9 a.m.–9 p.m.
Loading & unloading	7 a.m.–7 p.m.	7 a.m.–7 p.m.	7 a.m.–7 p.m.
Loudspeakers & PA systems	7 a.m.–10 p.m.	7 a.m.–10 p.m.	7 a.m.–10 p.m.
Radios, TVs, instruments, amplifiers	7 a.m.–11 p.m.	7 a.m.–11 p.m.	7 a.m.–11 p.m.

Outside these hours, the activity is prohibited when it creates a noise disturbance. Loudspeakers are barred overnight unless a City official permits them. The day after Thanksgiving and Dec. 26 follow Saturday construction hours.

The current draft contains exemptions for city and school projects. Hour limits would not apply to work on any public building, street, park, school or utility, but state and federal regulations would still apply. The City / MPS would still be required to minimize noise and notify abutters.

LISTED DISTURBANCES · (C) · NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST

17 specific noise disturbances

1 Air conditioners & compressors	**2** Animals & birds	**3** Construction & demolition	**4** Outdoor power tools
5 Alarms over 10 min/hour	**6** Non-emergency bells & sirens	**7** Unmuffled engine exhaust	**8** Explosives & firearms
9 Rattling vehicles or loads	**10** Unnecessary horns	**11** Late loading & unloading	**12** Loudspeakers & PA systems
13 Late-night music & TV	**14** Shouting & yelling	**15** Street sales by outcry	**16** Vehicle repair & testing
17 Vibration felt past the property line			

Built-in exemptions: places of worship (bells), ice-cream trucks (street sales), authorized emergency vehicles (sirens).

DECIBEL LIMITS · (D) · OPTION A

Somerville-style: limits set by time of day

Max dB(A)	I · Day	II · Evening	III · Night
Under 10 min	75	70	60
10 min – 2 hr	70	60	50
Over 2 hr	60	50	40

I 7 a.m.–6 p.m., all districts

II 6–10 p.m. residential; 6 p.m.–7 a.m. all other districts

III 10 p.m.–7 a.m., residential

How it works

- Measured at the receiving property line, or inside the next unit in condos and apartments
- Residential limits protect homes no matter where the noise comes from
- Sundays and holidays: night limits all day in residential areas
- Exempt from dB limits: highway traffic, lawn and yard tools, construction equipment

DECIBEL LIMITS · (D) · OPTION B

Alternative: limits set by zoning district as well

Max dB(A)	Residential		Commercial		Industrial	
Duration	**Day**	**Night**	**Day**	**Night**	**Day**	**Night**
Under 10 min	70	60	75	65	80	70
10 min – 2 hr	65	55	70	60	75	65
Over 2 hr	60	50	65	55	70	60

Day 7 a.m.–10 p.m.; **Night** 10 p.m.–7 a.m.

The **receiving** property's zoning sets the column

Mixed-use: commercial limits; homes get residential +5 dB

Sundays & holidays: residential night limits all day

ENFORCEMENT · (E)

Civil fines, enforced by three departments

Most violations

Warning	$100	$300
1st offense	2nd offense	3rd and after

Construction & demolition

$100	$300
1st offense	2nd and after

How it's enforced

- Police Chief, Building Commissioner and Director of Public Public Health
- Noncriminal tickets under M.G.L. c. 40, § 21D
- Each violation is a separate offense
- City can still seek a court order
- Departments may set procedures, but cannot change the standards

FOR THE COMMITTEE

Questions to settle

1 **Option A or Option B?**

Only one decibel framework can stay in the final ordinance.

2 **Are the hours and fines right for Medford?**

Feedback from residents, businesses and the enforcing departments.

Next steps: Public comments, Return to Committee

CITY OF MEDFORD

medfordma.org Website Review

Findings & Recommendations

Councilor Justin Tseng
Medford City Council · May 2026

35+	6	3
recommendations	sections reviewed	peer cities benchmarked

OVERVIEW

The site has real effort behind it — but significant gaps

High

Fix within 30 days

Stale content, broken links, outdated social media, confusing navigation labels

Medium

Fix within 90 days

Redesign resident pages, restructure navigation, improve search, add multilingual access

Low

6–12 months

Open data portal, .gov domain migration, address lookup tool, CMS evaluation

SECTION 1 · HIGH PRIORITY

Quick fixes — immediate impact, low effort

Stale content

Mayor's page shows past events (Egg Dash, Patriots' Day), vaccination stats from 2021, and a Winter Extravaganza 2025 page still live. State of the City stops at 2023.

Broken links

COVID-19 in the City Resources menu links back to the homepage. Textile recycling URL is truncated. Full link audit recommended within 30 days.

Confusing terminology

Same office called "Medford Senior Center" and "Council on Aging" in different menus. SeeClickFix listed with no explanation. "Employment Opportunities*" has unexplained asterisk.

Social media mismatch

Footer links to Twitter/X but not Instagram, which the City actively promotes. Footer Footer should reflect actual active channels.

SECTIONS 2 & 3 · MEDIUM PRIORITY

Content & navigation improvements

"For Residents" page

Bare list of links with no grouping or descriptions. Needs task-based categories: Pay & File, Permits, Emergency, etc.

Navigation overload

35+ departments in a single dropdown. Convert to a searchable full-page directory. Limit top-level nav to 6 items.

City Council page

No individual councilor bios or contact pages. Meeting records offsite at CivicClerk. Newsletter uses bit.ly redirect.

Mayor's Office page

Content hidden in accordion panels. Projects list includes includes items from 2020 with no status. Split into bio, bio, press, and projects pages.

Building Dept.

Dense regulatory text. Restructure as task flows: "I want to pull a permit," "schedule an inspection."

Housing resources

No unified tenant/renter page. Housing rehab loans and CPC info buried under Planning. Residents facing housing insecurity have no clear starting point.

SECTION 3 · MEDIUM PRIORITY

Design, UX & accessibility

1 **Generic homepage**

No tagline, call to action, or civic identity. City Hall photo tells residents nothing about what to do. Add a primary CTA: "Report · Pay · Find."

2 **Search underperforms**

Basic Finalsite CMS search returns page titles only. Needs featured results for top queries (parking, permits, trash) and PDF/form indexing.

3 **Mobile not optimized**

35-item dropdown menus collapse poorly on mobile. Accordion-heavy Mayor's page requires many taps. Goal: all critical services reachable in 2 taps.

4 **Accessibility & SEO gaps**

Homepage meta-description reads "Home - City of Medford." WCAG 2.1 AA audit needed. MA municipalities face increasing federal ADA scrutiny.

SECTION 6 · PEER BENCHMARKING

What our neighbors do better

Cambridge

cambridgema.gov

- "I Want To" task-based navigation
- Services A–Z directory
- Verified .gov domain
- Open data portal
- Single public comment signup URL
- Integrated PrimeGov meeting archive

Somerville

somervillema.gov

- 9-language toggle above the fold
- 311 as top-level nav item
- Real-time status tiles (trash delay, sweeping)
- "Most Popular" links on homepage
- Payments as dedicated nav section
- Address-based personalization tool

National leaders

Kansas City, Fort Wayne, Windsor CO

- Task-first homepages (not news/photos)
- WCAG 2.1 AA built into redesigns
- Housing portals (+98% page views for James City Co.)
- Content governance frameworks
- AI chatbots for common queries

ALL SECTIONS · SUMMARY

Top recommendations at a glance

Recommendation	Page / Area	Priority	Peer ref.
Remove stale events & outdated stats	Mayor's Office	High	
Fix COVID-19 broken link	City Resources menu	High	
Full link audit	Site-wide	High	
Redesign For Residents with task categories	For Residents	Medium	Cambridge, Somerville
Convert dept. dropdown to searchable directory	Navigation	Medium	Cambridge A–Z
Add more visible multilingual toggle (9 languages)	Site-wide	Medium	Somerville
Councilor profile pages + meeting archive	City Council	Medium	Cambridge PrimeGov
Housing Resources landing page	For Residents	Medium	James City Co. VA
WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility audit	Site-wide	Medium	Windsor CO
Address lookup tool + open data portal	Site-wide	Low	Somerville, Cambridge
Evaluate .gov domain migration	Site-wide	Low	Cambridge

RESOLUTION & NEXT STEPS

What the Council can do now

Request IT + Comms response
Ask the Communications and IT offices for a timeline and resource plan addressing at addressing at minimum the High-priority items within 30 days.

Solicit public input
Residents are the primary users. Open a comment period or public survey — what do Medford residents most need from the City's website?

Set a benchmark date
Schedule a 6-month progress check. Track: stale content removed, link audit complete, mobile usability score, and multilingual toggle status.

Councilor Justin Tseng
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Full memo and resolution available on request