

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

March 2017

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ANC News

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

Agassiz Neighborhood Council provides a forum for discussion and action. Our community is stronger when citizens take an active part. Attend a Council meeting, suggest topics for discussion, volunteer on a subcommittee --get involved!

Visit: bit.ly/agassiz-neighborhood-council



Community

NEW WALK SIGNAL AT MASS. & WENDELL: FOR BETTER OR WORSE?

Prepared by Astrid Dodds, Wendell St. resident & pedestrian advocate

Two ANC notices in February invited residents to weigh in on the new concurrent walk signal at Mass. Ave.-Wendell-Shepard. Nineteen people have responded so far:

- 13 oppose the new concurrent walk signal, citing turning motor vehicles as a danger to crossing pedestrians
- 6 approve of the new signal timing, 3 citing

shorter lines of waiting vehicles on Wendell



These replies helped me make the case to Joe Barr, Director of the Cambridge Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department, that many pedestrians see only risk in trying to cross Mass. Ave. with cars turning in front of and behind them.

A sampling of responses opposing the new signal timing:

- "I was nearly struck by a car on January 27th when a (driver edged) into the crosswalk when I was right in front of him . . ."
- "I fear for the children who attend Baldwin and Graham & Parks . . . and anyone with a physical challenge that slows them down."
- "Drivers are eager to beat the light and are not looking for pedestrians."
- As an older person with mobility problems,

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



MAR. 14 - 7:30 PM

Maud Morgan Arts
20A Sacramento Street

Agenda:

- **Special Permit application to create basement apartments at 3-5 Linnaean St.**
- Discussion of **sharing daytime parking in our neighborhood to support merchants on Mass. Ave.**
- **Creating a Local Business Association for businesses along Mass. Ave. from Cambridge Common to Porter Square**

- (it) is confusing, time consuming, and . . . hazardous to have to watch out for cars.”
- “I have two young children and cross Mass. Ave. numerous times a week. Drivers turning left onto Mass. Ave. from Wendell St. cannot be trusted to yield to pedestrians.”
 - “I got to the middle of the Mass. Ave. crosswalk and had to step back to avoid a small truck which cut the corner turning left from Wendell St. . . . the driver did not see me.”

In January, the Traffic Dept. changed the walk signal timing at Mass. & Wendell to “concurrent.” Prior to January 20th, the walk light was on simultaneously for all four crosswalks – an “all-ways walk.” The new setting invites pedestrians to cross Mass. Ave. while cars lined up on Wendell St. have a green light. Cars exiting Wendell now compete with pedestrians in Mass. Ave. crosswalks.

Here are excerpts from Traffic, Parking & Transportation Director Joe Barr’s February 16, 2017, reply to my first protest of the new concurrent signal:

“[The] Engineering staff evaluated the intersection (including reviewing turning counts and making detailed observations at the intersection) to determine if modifying the signal made sense. Based on this review, we concluded that the intersection would operate with reduced delay for pedestrians and with improved compliance, if we made the change to a concurrent operation. This decision was not made with any specific consideration of the impact on motor vehicles, but was focused on improving conditions for pedestrians . . .

[I]t takes some time for users to adjust to the change, so I think it is important to allow that adjustment process to take place before we perform an evaluation and determine whether any additional adjustments are needed. We will

continue to observe the intersection to determine if we see any emergent issues that require more changes, and I would certainly be happy to take a look through the responses you received from your local community.”

I (Astrid) have crossed Mass. Ave.-Wendell-Shepard on foot 2-5 times a week for decades. Waiting for walk lights and buses at this intersection, I watch how travelers of all modes behave. This intersection worked pretty well before the switch. What were the problems for pedestrians here that triggered a Traffic Depart. project “to determine if modifying the signal made sense?”

The present concurrent walk signal timing at Mass. Ave.-Wendell-Shepard is troubling to me for the following reasons:

Concurrent signal timing is ageist.

It favors pedestrians ages 20-40 who are in such a hurry that they cannot be asked to wait “too long” for a walk light.

Concurrent walk undermines the city’s commitment to Universal Design.

Obstacle-free access to roadways is just as important as access to buildings and parks; concurrent walk turns motor vehicles into obstacles.

Concurrent walk in the age of distracted driving is a killer.

Waiting for the Wendell St. light, some drivers turn to their phones which can render them distracted even as they start moving across the intersection to turn left. According to one American Automobile Association (AAA) study, talking on a cellphone induces “cognitive blindness.”

“Where the number of turning vehicles is very high, we may choose [all-ways walk].” (see: http://bit.ly/cambMA_ped_signals)

This intersection has a “very high” number of turning vehicles. If the city wants to keep the pedestrians it has and encourage walking, it will

heed its own caveat and return to an all-ways walk signal at Mass. Ave.-Wendell-Shepard.

How You Can Help

If you have observations (pro or con) about the new Mass. Ave.-Wendell-Shepard concurrent signal, you can email Phoebe Sinclair, Community Liaison, at psinclair@agassiz.org or (617) 349-6287 x10. Please mention approximate dates, the street where you live, and if we can use your name or not. Direct quotes from all replies will be forwarded to Mr. Barr.

All modes of travel welcome. However, since Mr. Barr says the signal change project at Mass. Ave.-Wendell-Shepard “was focused on improving conditions for pedestrians,” experiences on foot are particularly relevant.

Watch the ANC Community Notice emails or the monthly Whistler newsletter for more about this signal timing issue. We may need to have a meeting about this in April or May. Meanwhile, if you view the signal change as a setback, it's not too soon to let your favorite City Councillor know.

Learn More

Read more about concurrent pedestrian signals on the Traffic Dept. website: bit.ly/cambMA_ped_signals

Contact the Traffic Depart. On the website, just below the Dept. phone numbers, a “contact us” option provides an email form: bit.ly/cambMA_tpt_feedback

AAA report “Measuring Cognitive Distractions” www.aaafoundation.org/measuring-cognitive-distractions

REMEMBERING HAIM GOLDBERG

Haim Goldberg of Cambridge, Massachusetts passed away on February 5, 2017, in Sarasota, Florida, of complications associated with

Parkinson's Disease. Mr. Goldberg was born in 1939 in Montreal, the devoted son of Eastern European immigrants, Abraham Goldberg and Gitel Cohen.

Growing up as a first generation Yiddish-speaking North American in Montreal, Mr. Goldberg was quickly recognized as an academic prodigy, achieving the highest score in Quebec on the standardized testing administered at that time. He attended McGill University on a full scholarship, earning an undergraduate degree in physics at age 19. Mr. Goldberg then received a Woodrow Wilson scholarship to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, where he completed his doctorate in physics at age 23.



Professor Goldberg had a highly successful career spanning more than 50 years at Northeastern University, where he focused his lecturing, research, and international collaboration in the field of high-energy particle physics. His voluminous legacy of publications and his progeny of former graduate students continue to generate important discoveries.

Mr. Goldberg leaves behind his loving wife of over 50 years, Miriam of Cambridge; his son Joel and daughter-in-law Cybill of Newton; his daughter, Maya Ginns, and son-in-law Michael Ginns of Arlington; his beloved grandchildren, India-Rose, Boaz, Sebastian, Saul and Gray, and a broad network of other relatives, former colleagues, and close friends. A private graveside funeral was held at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

ABC Remembers Haim

Haim Goldberg was often seen participating at Agassiz Baldwin Community events and efforts.

Along with his wife and ABC Board Co-Chair Miriam, Haim has been a steadfast and invaluable supporter of our agency. We'll miss seeing him gently challenging youngsters on our backyard bocce court and strolling peaceably down Mass. Ave.

Message from the Goldberg Family

We will be celebrating Haim's wonderful and meaningful life with a memorial ceremony in Cambridge at Mount Auburn Cemetery followed by a reception at the Goldberg home. We invite all family, friends and colleagues of Haim and his extended family to attend this special day of remembrance.

When: Saturday, May 13, 2017
11:00 AM

Where: Mt Auburn Cemetery, Story
Chapel, 580 Mt. Auburn St.,
Cambridge

Reception to follow at the Goldberg household:
59 Frost Street, Cambridge

In lieu of flowers, donations in Haim's memory may be sent to:

McGill University, Faculty of Science,
Scholarship Fund:
www.mcgill.ca/give/

Union of Concerned Scientists:
www.ucsusa.org/

**THANK YOU ABC ANNUAL FUND
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Agassiz Baldwin Community thanks our Annual Fund supporters from 2016.

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Become a Donor

Donations to ABC provide valuable funds for many programs and services. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Agassiz Baldwin Community, 20 Sacramento Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 or made online at: bit.ly/donate-to-ABC.



Agassiz Baldwin Children's Programs

HIP HOP FESTIVAL PHOTOS

Our 21st Annual Hip Hop Festival for kids welcomed our very own Agassiz Afterschool Dance Crew, and featured returning favorites Community Arts Center, OrigiNation, King Open Extended Day Dance Crew, FloorLords, The Hip Hop Transformation, Emcee Naheem Garcia, and DJ Daz One.



Many thanks to Molly Juhlin, Micah Eglington-Woods, Phoebe Sinclair, our guest photographer Allison Shao, and other Agassiz Baldwin team members for organizing the event. Special thanks to all the kids, parents, and hip hop enthusiasts who attended.

Generously supported by Cambridge Arts Council and Massachusetts Cultural Council.

View photos online at:
bit.ly/hiphop_photos_2017



Community Calendar

March 2017

Tuesday, March 14	7:30-9:00 PM	ANC Meeting (see page 1 for agenda) Maud Morgan Arts, 20A Sacramento St. All are welcome, please join us!
Wednesday, March 22	6:00-7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting, 20 Sacramento St., 2nd Floor Public welcome

The Whistler is published monthly September - June by the Agassiz Baldwin Community, distribution 2,000. Call (617) 349-6287 to receive by mail or email. The newsletter is also posted each month online at www.agassiz.org. Items of interest to the neighborhood should be submitted for consideration no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication date.

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