

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

May 2016

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other leading out. The developer proposes to fill in the south-most curb cut, which may allow for one new metered parking space. The remaining curb cut will be nine feet wide and provide access to the driveway from which vehicles will enter/exit the underground garage. The Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeal has reviewed this plan and approved the variance.

ANC News

NOTES FROM THE APR. 12 MEETING

New Residential Development Project at 1699 Mass. Ave.

Toby Seto, manager for Lotus Harvard Enterprise, LLC, the family group that owns Changsho restaurant, attended the Council meeting, accompanied by architect Jai Singh Khalsa of Khalsa Design, a Somerville-based firm. Mr. Khalsa presented designs for a twenty-unit residential development project at 1699 Mass. Ave., and explained an application to the city for a curb cut.

The new building:

- Will contain twenty-one, two and three-bedroom residential units as well as 1600 square feet of ground floor retail space
- Will have underground parking
- Is an as-of-right project that received a variance for underground parking and relocation of a curb cut

Curb Cut Application

There are two existing driveway curb cuts at the site, one leading into the parking lot and the

Q&A:

- Q:** Has anyone asked the owners of Changsho if the restaurant will be negatively affected by the loss of the parking lot?
- A:** Mr. Seto responded that the owners of Changsho, himself one, believe the restaurant won't lose business as customers largely use public transportation or on-street parking.

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



MAY 10 - 7:30 PM

Maud Morgan Arts
20A Sacramento Street

Annual Meeting

The Council will vote to approve the slate for the 2016 ABC Board of Directors. All are invited to attend, meet the Board, and enjoy light refreshments.

Mass. Ave. Zoning Petition Update

“A zoning overlay district was established North of Porter Square in 2012, but at the time there was no support extending it to our section of Mass. Ave.,” explained Peter Kroon of Linnaean St. “So we put together a petition for both sides of the avenue south of Porter Square and submitted it to the City Council in October, 2015. The Cambridge Planning Board reviewed it twice last fall and submitted to the City Council its recommendation for approval on February 16, 2016. Due to delays, including the transition following the City Council election, we needed to re-file the petition, which we did on April 15, 2016.”

Mr. Kroon, representing a group of sixteen local residents that wrote and filed the zoning petition, attended the Council meeting to provide an update and detail next steps. He provided a few examples of what the petition covers, such as ensuring that new structures in the Business A-2 zone will have ground floor retail, developers will be encouraged to provide higher ceiling clear heights to make retail space more appealing, front set-back waivers will be removed so as to widen sidewalks over time and to reduce the ‘canyoning’ effect of having tall structures beside older homes facing the Ave., etc.

“We have a vibrant and successful retail ecosystem that we want to protect and promote,” stated Mr. Kroon. “Continuity is key. If existing retail gets replaced by a building that does not include ground floor retail, the retail ecosystem will be diminished. So one of our principal goals was to promote continuous retail.”

Related to the presentation, residents discussed parking and how they’ve seen it change over the seasons and years, as well as shared opinions on transportation modalities such as biking, walking, and ride-share options. When the conversation concluded, Mr. Kroon confirmed that the new zoning language does not include any changes to the current parking requirements in the area, which remain one off-street parking space per dwelling unit.

The zoning petition for Mass. Ave., (north of Cambridge Common to Porter Square), is expected to be re-reviewed and passed by the City Council later this spring.

Read a draft of the zoning proposal at:
bit.ly/MaPoCo-Peter-Kroon

Learn more on the City’s website at:
bit.ly/CDD-MaPoCo-Petition

Are you interested in participating in citywide planning? Get involved with Envision Cambridge. Learn more online at:
bit.ly/envision_cambridge_2016

Should Agassiz Become a Neighborhood Conservation District?

Dennis Carlone, City Councillor, architect and urban designer, joined the Council to share his experience attempting to establish a Conservation District in Neighborhood 9.

“The purpose of a Neighborhood Conservation District is to conserve the essence of a neighborhood, not every detail,” Councillor Carlone stated. “They help maintain and perhaps even increase the character of historic homes.”

According to Councillor Carlone, a decade ago residents in Neighborhood 9 watched houses being purchased and drastically changed. Following a successful effort in mid-Cambridge, a group worked to establish a district in a portion of Neighborhood 9, but at the conclusion of the process, it was voted down. Where some residents hoped to preserve architecturally distinct houses and streets, others were concerned that a district might require future renovations that they would not be able to afford, or might limit new architectural styles.

Councillor Carlone recommended:

- Conservation Districts don’t need to comprise an entire neighborhood
- Enough residents must be interested to establish a District

- For more insight/guidance, invite Charlie Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, to an ANC meeting

Q&A

A: Is there a current proposal?

Q: No, this is just an introduction.

Q: What are other options for preserving the integrity of a neighborhood?

A: Cambridge has Historic Districts and Neighborhood Conservation Districts. Specific zoning and guidelines can also be utilized. Learn more at: bit.ly/housing_dev_pres_CDD

Sacramento Field Renovations & Access

Ellen Kokinda, Assistant Planner and Stuart Dash, Director of Community Planning, with Cambridge Community Development (CDD) updated the Council on the community process for upcoming renovations to Sacramento Field.

“We rate city parks every year or two and determine which need to be renovated soon,” stated Mr. Dash. “We were happy when Community Preservation Act funds came through for Sacramento Field. We know that the field is well loved by many and our goal is for it to remain a great neighborhood park that attracts many different uses.”

Field Access

Responding to ongoing discussions about field access, Ms. Kokinda and Mr. Dash provided insight into CDD’s thinking and summarized their meetings with the gardeners and the Baldwin School parents.

Currently, there are two ways to enter onto Sacramento Field. The main entrance is through the parking lot of the Guidance Center, whose building and lot is owned by Harvard University. The second entrance is via a walkway on Sacramento Place. (The city considers this access unviable for the neighborhood.)

Over the years, the city has considered options for improving access to benefit the neighborhood. This past fall, they approached Sacramento St. Community Garden members about installing a path along the garden’s left or right edge. Rob Steck, Cambridge’s Landscape Architect, assessed options for a path that would be up to date with today’s standards including those required by the American Disability Act (ADA) and as well as assessed other design constraints.

The city evaluated the impacts of a path along both the left and right edge of the garden with input from garden leadership. Gardeners expressed a range of preferences for a path along one side or the other, with some feeling that any path through the garden would be a significant loss.

Working closely with garden leadership, CDD will be proposing the right-side option for better neighborhood access and in part to preserve the most trees. Ms. Kokinda and Mr. Dash confirmed that lost garden space will be replaced foot-for-foot in the redesign of the field, although the relocated plots won’t have the benefit of full sun that the current right-side plots enjoy.

“One issue that the gardeners alerted us to was when the park designer added buffer space, making the proposed path ten-feet wide,” stated Mr. Dash. “So we’re going to rework it and reclaim some of that space for the garden. We understand that it’s a complex situation and both path locations have trade-offs. We also apologize to the gardeners, neighbors, and Baldwin School community for not initiating meetings earlier. There have been petitions posted online on behalf of the garden and the school, but we’ve worked to clear the air since then.”

Our intention early on was to make the field a great park, but I think improving access for the school and community is a good outcome. The garden will be taking a hit, and we want to acknowledge their generosity and express our

thanks for how the gardeners have been willing to work with the city.”

Mr. Dash concluded, “This has been a model for civil discussion on a tough issue. I hope we get to the point that everyone thinks Sacramento Field is a great park with a garden at its heart.”

Q&A

Q: Will you be retaining the present walkway in the Guidance Center parking lot?

A: Yes. We’ve been talking to Harvard about improving it in such a way that preserves their right of egress.

Q: Would paving the path/walkway reduce the amount of water getting to the plants? Can you make a porous path?

A: Due to our budget, we’re might not be able to use permeable paving materials. However, we’re putting extra attention into fencing, drainage, etc. (Note: City Councillor Carlone encouraged CDD to obtain alternate bids for paving material.)

Q: Is there or will there be an access from Mass. Ave?

A: No.

Q: Have you considered relocating the whole community garden to a different part of the field?

A: No. Most gardeners cherish their soil and the garden receives the best sun exposure where it is now.

Q: Have you considered renaming the field?

A: Naming requests need to go through the City Council.

Q: Will there be more opportunities for community input?

A: We expect that we’ll get robust input about the field’s tot lot, off-leash hours for dogs, the running path, and more. There will likely be three community meetings. If you can’t attend, please send comments and questions

to Ellen Kokinda at (617) 349-4618 or ekokinda@cambridgema.gov

Information will be posted online at:
www.cambridgema.gov/sacramentofield



Community

ANNUAL MEETING

Please join us Tuesday, May 10th, for our annual meeting; a once-a-year celebration and social event dedicated to reaching out to one another in a friendly way to begin a successful new year.

Everyone is welcome to attend, meet the board, and enjoy light refreshments.

What: Annual Meeting
When: Tuesday, May 10, 7:30 PM
Where: Maud Morgan Arts Center, 2D studio, second floor

The council will vote to approve the slate (below) for the 2016 Board of Directors.

Officers for a one-year term:

Andrea Walsh, Co-Chair, Eustis St.
Emily Anderson, Co-Chair, Abodeon
Hull Fulweiler, Clerk, Howland St.
Jonathan Lehrich, Treasurer,
Cogswell Ave.

Directors for a two-year term:

Emily Anderson, Abodeon

Miriam Goldberg, Frost St.
Fred Meyer, Hammond St.
Andrea Walsh, Eustis St.

Directors in mid-term:

Gao Wen Shao, Fayette St.
Stephen Diamond, Frost St.
Wendy Prellwitz, Wendell St.

SAVE THE DATE: BACKYARD BLOCK PARTY

Come celebrate our community and the arts at our fifth annual Backyard Block Party (formerly known as Play Day)!

What: Backyard Block Party
When: Saturday, June 11th
1:00-4:00 PM
Admission: Free

Enjoy:
Hooping Lab!
Friendly family competition!
Guessing contests with prizes!
Boston Hoop Troop performance!
Children's art exhibition!
BIG blue building blocks!
Popcorn in the shade!
Balloon twisting!
Giant bubbles!
... and more

Check out photos from last year's event:
bit.ly/play-day-photos-2015



City Wide

ADDRESSING GAS LEAKS IN CAMBRIDGE

Submitted by Linda Brion-Meisels, resident

Do you step into the sunshine to smell the flowers and instead smell



gas? It is most likely natural gas, as there are more than 200 documented leaks in Cambridge alone. What we call 'natural gas' is 95% methane – “a greenhouse gas on steroids.” The leaking gas is accelerating climate change and increasing our gas bills. Mothers, grandmothers and allies tired of paying for escaping, harmful gas are tagging all known gas leaks to help make our city's harmful, hidden problem visible.

Mothers Out Front is a mothers-inspired grassroots effort launched in Cambridge that is combating climate change so our children will inherit a livable climate. MA consumers pay \$100 million each year for wasted, harmful methane gas seeping from leaks beneath our streets. This wasted gas also increases our state's annual greenhouse gas inventory by 10% at a time when that figure should be decreasing.

On Beacon Hill, House Bill H.2871 requires utilities to repair gas leaks when a street is opened for any other reason and House Bill H.2870 prohibits utilities from passing the cost of wasted gas onto consumers. When a bill similar to H.2870 was passed in Texas, 55% of the leaks were fixed within three years. Mothers Out Front and allies support these bills and encourage legislators to pass them quickly.

On May 2, 2016 Cambridge Mothers Out Front launched its campaign to tag known gas leaks. Keep your eyes open – and nose alert – for hundreds of signs alerting us to gas leaks. Take a look to see if there's one near you!

Learn more at: mothersoutfront.org

Community Calendar

May 2016

Tuesday, May 10	7:30-9:00 PM	Annual Meeting (see page 1 for agenda) Maud Morgan Arts, 20A Sacramento St., 2D Studio All are welcome, please join us!
Wednesday, May 11	6:00-7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting, 20 Sacramento St, 2nd Floor Public welcome
Tuesday, May 24	5:00-7:00 PM	LWN Spring Social, 20 Sacramento St., Chandler Gallery
Monday, May 30		Memorial Day holiday, ABC Programs and office closed

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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