

the agassiz WHISTLER

VOL. II, No. 11

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Ten Cents

THE ANNUAL REPORT

The Cambridge Community Schools Annual Report is enclosed with this issue. This report presents, fairly it seems, a comprehensive picture of the operations of the Community Schools programs in their first full year of operation.

The Annual Report was put together by a committee of seven drawn from the Community Schools field staff. It was distributed to city officials and interested community people. Extra copies are available at the Agassiz Community Schools office, 28 Sacramento Street.

INSURANCE COSTS KILL RINK

Because of the prohibitive expense of purchasing liability insurance, the Agassiz Community Schools Program will not be able to build a skating rink on the property known as the "Y" field - the open playfield in the middle of the Sacramento-Garfield block.

The high cost of the insurance, \$376 until March 31st, was particularly disappointing as the Corporation of Harvard University had okayed Community Schools' use of the "Y" field, leaving only the obstacle of purchasing insurance before construction could begin.

For Community Schools to pay the \$376 premium was simply out of the question because the 1971 Community Schools budget has not been considered, as of yet, by the City Council. And until the 1971 budget is considered and approved by the City Council, the operating capital of each local Community Schools program is limited.

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PLEASE SUPPORT THE WHISTLER!

This month The Whistler will have been in existence for six months. Costing about \$20 an issue, our newspaper has been subsidized since the outset by the Agassiz Community Schools program.

At this juncture, we are unable to make a commitment for any specific number of issues in the future, because of the lack of money, city-wide, for Community Schools programs. Once the city budget has been announced, and, assuming our local program is fully funded, decisions can be made as to the future of The Whistler.

We do want to continue publishing throughout this lean period, however, and we believe the neighborhood wants us to. Therefore, we are asking subscribers to contribute at least \$1.00 each, so that we may continue as long as possible - hopefully, at least until the end of the school year.

Won't you send your contribution right away? And, if you have neighbors who haven't yet gotten around to subscribing but would like to receive the paper, please ask for their support.

YES, I want to receive The Whistler as long as possible. I enclose a contribution. (Make check or money order payable to the Agassiz Community Schools Program.)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

REPORT ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

According to the Boston Globe of January 31, "Cambridge residents were told yesterday the city would need no new major school construction programs during the next ten years." This was the essential point made in that newspaper's summary of the meeting held by the Cambridge Planning Department last month to present a seven-volume report to citizens entitled "Elementary School Building Study."

The study, reported the Cambridge Chronicle, was nearly two years in preparation and cost nearly \$65,000. In it are details and choices (plans, etc.) available to the school committee for a school building program for the seventies.

The principal elements of change in Cambridge as listed in the Planning Department's report are:

1) There are one-quarter less public and parochial school children in Cambridge than ten years ago, but several schools are overcrowded.

2) Parochial school enrollments have declined by 56.5% in the last ten years, several parochial schools have closed, several others are uncertain of continuation.

3) Educational programs are continually evolving (such as different combinations of grades under one roof than we now have) with different requirements for physical space. Alternative grade structures - the present kindergarten through eighth grade, a "feeder" school system of some K-6 and some K-8 schools, a junior high school system, or a middle school system - have been considered.

We reprint from the Chronicle of February 4:

"(Planning Director) Bowyer explained that while the decline in school-age children is generally city-wide, there are exceptions, particularly in areas where extensive low-income family-type apartments are being constructed. He pointed to the Rindge Towers, Walden Square, Blair Pond, Huron Towers and Shady Hill developments....

Regarding the existing public school buildings, the report states, 'In comparison to the three new Tobin, King and Kennedy Schools, every existing school is educationally obsolescent.'

The report includes a study by Cambridge architect J. Robert Hamilton, of the nine existing older schools. The most significant finding was that, if properly maintained, the buildings could have a useful life of at least 30 to 40 more years. He notes, '...no existing school building in Cambridge needs to be abandoned because of its physical condition.' To bring each building up to the standards of the new schools... the investment would range from \$692,000 for the Fletcher School to \$1,164,000 for the Roberts.

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 THE AGASSIZ WHISTLER is published twice a month by the Agassiz Community Schools Program for the entire neighborhood. The cost is 10¢ per issue. Call 876-9268 for more information or visit the office at 28 Sacramento Street. We welcome your literary contributions, letters, suggestions, or advertisement requests.

Kate Mattes, Agassiz Community Schools
 Co-ordinator

Jay Lord, Assistant Co-ordinator

Jill Norton, Editor for The Whistler

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THE 1971 BUDGET

by Tom Neel

Practically every city department and agency in Cambridge needs to increase its operating budget this year. In this way Community Schools is like the rest. 1970 was a start-up year; 1971 will be the first full year of operations.

On December 1, 1970, a full-scale budget was submitted to the Budget and Personnel Office and the City Manager. Meetings since then between the members of the Community Schools Commission, the Acting Director, and the City Manager have produced a budget of about \$378,000 - an increase of approximately \$61,000 over the grand total cost of the program in 1970. The budget allows \$52,800 for neighborhood programs, about \$3,700 for each school. Money would be designated as follows: 11% for program supplies, 15% for program equipment, 44% for services, and 30% for part-time and work-study salaries. These are ratios spent in 1970.

The City Manager will submit the total Community Schools budget as a single item, as part of his 1971 Budget Message to the City Council. Legally this message must be submitted, in print, by February 15. After submission, the budget cannot be increased.

The budget will be reviewed and can be cut by the Finance Committee, which is a committee of the whole Council, chaired by Councilor Edward Crane. The Finance Committee makes recommendations, then reviews the budget in regular council meetings.

The public can attend both the Finance and the Council meetings - they are inter-

esting. Finance meetings are traditionally held at 5 P.M. on Mondays, but can be called any time, with a day's notice. Last year the review of the budget took almost six weeks, because the Council was also meeting to elect a mayor. The budget could be reviewed sooner this year.

Tom Neel is Acting Director for Cambridge Community Schools. He wrote this article on February 11 especially for The Whistler.

JAY LORD LEAVING AGASSIZ PROGRAM

At the January 21st evening Council meeting, Jay Lord told the group assembled that he would be leaving the Agassiz program at the end of March. Jay was co-ordinator of the program from February to October of 1970 and has been assistant co-ordinator since.

When staff changes were thought beneficial for the program in the fall because of the co-ordinator's heavy work load, Jay Lord and Kate Mattes switched job categories. Madeline Taylor was added to the staff on a part-time basis, sharing the assistant co-ordinator's salary with Jay, who also worked part-time. At that time he and Kate told the Council that, subject to its wishes, they would remain with the Agassiz program until March 1971.

It was also agreed that this spring both jobs, co-ordinator and assistant co-ordinator, would be reconsidered by the Council in terms of the neighborhoods needs. It is hoped that neighborhood people will give serious thought to the number of staff people needed and what their jobs should encompass. This matter will be discussed at the next Council meeting, to be held on Monday, February 22 at 8 P.M. in the school.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Comparing costs of new schools to rehabilitating old buildings, Bowyer noted that the approximate cost to modernize would be \$2,000 per student while it would be \$6,600 per pupil to construct a completely new school. Rehabilitation of the older buildings also takes into account facilities for community school use.

Bowyer explained that the direction the school building program takes is actually dependent upon school policy as it relates to the continuation of the present kindergarten through eighth grade plus four high school years or a change to the middle school, feeder school, or the junior high school system.

If the school committee embarks upon a program requiring new buildings, the report specifies that only the North Cambridge, Middle Cambridge-Model Cities area, the central part of the West Cambridge neighborhood and the Agassiz School neighborhood should be considered.

Eleven sites are considered in the report as alternatives for the school committee to select if they embark upon a new building rather than a rehabilitation program. These include: . . . (10) The 5.5 acre Sachs Estate, a heavily wooded vacant tract bounded by Beacon, Bryant, and Irving Streets and Francis Avenue. 11) The Sacramento Street block as bounded by Oxford and Garfield Streets and Mass. Ave. "

The last two sites mentioned in the study are in the Agassiz neighborhood. Harvard University owns the Sachs Estate and a good number, but not all, of the properties in what is referred to as the Sacramento Street block.

AGASSIZ SCHOOL

(From the Cambridge Planning Department's report, "Elementary School Building Study, No. 4, Western Area." We have condensed the section on Agassiz School for The Whistler. Not included here: detailed information on the physical plant of the Agassiz School, descriptions of repair needed, and design plans for the proposals suggested. - an addition for a K-8 school and modernization plans for other than a K-8 school.)

Population Trends

The overall decline of births in the district is somewhat above the city-wide average. A further decline is anticipated as university students and unmarried persons continue to move into the neighborhood. It appears that even the young couples with children remain only a few years and then move out - evidenced by the considerably higher enrollments in the lower grades than in the upper grades. Although this phenomenon is true for the city as a whole, it is especially relevant here.

The Agassiz district. . . has borne much of the brunt of the expansion of the Harvard community and of young adults in the last decade. The likely continuation of that trend requires that the housing and population changes in the neighborhood be closely monitored. An early investment by the City in the Agassiz School might be influential in the amount of investment made (or continued) by families in the district.

Proposed New Housing

Harvard University's current plans for faculty housing at the Sachs Estate call for 297 apartments. . . . Between 105 and 125 elementary school-age children are projected to live in this development.

Harvard also plans a married student housing development on land it owns in the Sacramento Street block.

Parochial Schools

It is assumed that the closing of the St. Paul School will have little, if any, effect on Agassiz School enrollments.

Enrollment Projections

An enrollment low was reached in 1967 - 176 school children in grades K-8. By 1969 the number had increased to 226 children. (Special classes not included.) This increase can be attributed almost exclusively to an increase in grades kindergarten, one and two. It is not clear why this increase has occurred, or whether it will continue.* The projected enrollment indicates a slight decrease in 1972. If the Harvard housing is built on the Sachs Estate, the enrollments will increase... if not, the enrollment may level off at a slightly lower level, corresponding to the decline in births.

Facilities

The Agassiz School was built 55 years ago, and is educationally obsolescent. Although the facilities which are inadequate or lacking are not individually very space consuming (except the gym and cafeteria), they are collectively.

Recreation

There are 9,300 square feet of playground space immediately adjacent to the Agassiz School. Use of the recently reno-

vated Alden lot across Sacramento Street provides an additional 11,000 square feet. This recreation space is not sufficient for a full K-8 school, but might be adequate if Agassiz converted to a K-6 school.

Condition of Agassiz School

The Agassiz School is one of nine older schools which were thoroughly analyzed by an architectural consultant. The results of this analysis reflect only the work needed to put the present structure into good operating condition. "Deferred maintenance" is the term usually applied to such corrective action. This work does not include the measures necessary to correct educationally obsolescent features of the building or to create a thoroughly modern school facility... Total cost of deferred maintenance: \$55,900.

Building Needs

The Agassiz is a basically sound building which can benefit from extensive rehabilitation-modernization. Due principally to the barrier of Massachusetts Avenue, it serves a residential area which is awkward to serve by another school, particularly for younger children.

The absence of a home economics, industrial arts room, language laboratory, and separate gymnasium, coupled with the low enrollments in the upper elementary grades, makes use of Agassiz as a full K-8 school questionable. Extensive rehabilitation and modernization, and possibly an addition, could convert the school into a very adequate K-6 (or K-5) school.

Inclusion of needed facilities within the present structure would require conversion of existing classrooms into special facilities and would reduce the effective capacity to about 190 pupils. An add-

*According to the Agassiz School PTA Directory for 1970-71, the enrollment this fall was 254, not including the special class, whose students come from throughout the city.

tion to the school is possible which would permit the effective capacity to be increased to about 460 pupils, enabling the Agassiz School to operate as a K-6 or a K-8 school. Acquisition of several lots west of the school would provide about 16,000 square feet of area but at a loss of 2 dwelling units and a rooming house.

Even though new housing may increase enrollments above the present capacity, a 460 capacity school (2 rooms per grade for 8 grades plus kindergarten) would seem to be more than the Agassiz district would need.... That might be desirable if the Agassiz and the overcrowded Peabody districts were paired. The older children... then could be assigned according to space and facilities available....

Some consideration has been given to building a new Agassiz School as a multiple use development in conjunction with the proposed Harvard housing development at Sacramento Street. The Harvard housing at Shady Hill might similarly include a school as a multiple use development.

The Agassiz School constitutes a very difficult decision due to the unpredictable population trends in the area. Public investment in the school may help to stabilize the family population in the district. On the other hand, the housing pressures working against family-type occupancy may be so overwhelming as to drive the families out of the district and leave the City with a modernized, but 2/3 empty, school.

NOTICE

The next Community Schools Council meeting will be held on Monday, February 22, at 8 P. M. in the Agassiz School. Everyone in the neighborhood is invited.

SKATING RINK

Continued from Page 1

However, next year, with rink plans available and with the precedent of Harvard having granted permission for the rink to be built, we can get an early start - building the rink before the first freeze.

TUESDAY EVENINGS AT 8:15

Special events at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, 42 Brattle St. Admission \$1.00. Limited seating; purchase tickets in advance.

March 2 - Underwater Excavation, Niki Scoufopoulos, archaeologist, will lecture on marine archaeology, drawing from her experience at Porto Cheli, Greece and also at Kyrenia, Cyprus, where a fourth century B. C. wreck was discovered.

March 9 - Pottery Making in Japan. The special techniques of throwing, glazing and firing Japanese pottery will be illustrated in a slide-talk by Louise Cort, assistant curator of the Oriental Department of the Fogg Museum, Harvard University.

March 16 - A Preview of the Boston Center for the Arts. An illustrated presentation of the plans to house the activities of Boston's performing and visual arts in a new Arts Center, by Gladys Kleinman, Assistant to the Director.

March 23 - An Introduction to Indian Music. Prakash Dahanuker will accompany Bindu Parikh of the Agra School of Northern Indian music, to demonstrate and explain the concepts of melody (raga) and improvisation.
