

The Whistler

March
1992

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

Council Meeting Notes

The February 12 Agassiz Neighborhood Council meeting was called to order and chaired by Jim O'Neill. One resident described an 8% rent increase in her building. There was general discussion of the trend toward increased cost for rent control apartments while market value rents decreased. While the landlord in question was Harvard Real Estate, it is the rent control board that determines rent control increases. The discussion brought up more questions than answers, and it seemed necessary for the ANC to address these problems at a meeting soon.

Astrid Dodds lead the discussion of traffic problems on Oxford St. She discussed the Draft Master Plan for Oxford St. Traffic (see pgs. 4-5). There was consensus that the plan was good, and for the first step it was agreed to articulate the most important issues at a meeting with Richard Rossi, Assistant City Manager; a sympathetic city councillor and members of the traffic committee. To those who braved the cold to attend this meeting, the most critical problems on Oxford St. were 1) the danger of the Wendell St. intersection, both to cars and pedestrians, and 2) the speed at which traffic traveled on the length of Oxford St.

 **Do you live near Oxford and Wendell Sts.?**

 **Will you help us report accidents?**

The Agassiz Traffic Committee needs your help. It has been clear for a long time that many accidents at that intersection do not get recorded by the Police Department—probably because the Police are not called. This means, unfortunately, that when we try to tell the Traffic and Parking Department that this intersection is dangerous, it turns a deaf ear.

We need citizen reports of accidents, near misses, fender-benders, U-turns and the like to convince Traffic and Parking that we are not talking through our hats.

Buildings near the Oxford-Wendell intersection have recently been leafleted by the Agassiz Traffic Committee in an effort to find residents willing to jot down what they see or hear. It doesn't have to be a full fledged "investigation"—just what you have time to jot down or phone in. If you live near that intersection, please phone in you accident, etc., reports as often as you wish to: 354-6553. Or alternatively, jot down what you hear or see (with a date and time) and, when you've got a few to report, mail to: Agassiz Traffic Committee, ANC, 20 Sacramento St. Cambridge, MA 02138.

Next Meeting of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

March 19 Thursday
7:30 PM

Agassiz Community Center
20 Sacramento St. Cambridge, MA 02138

Agenda:

7:30 PM General Business

8:00 PM Sandra Coleman, Harvard Law School Administrative Dean, will share plans and construction schedule for Holmes Hall. Architects for the new building sited on the Law School campus are Kallmann, McKinnell and Wood.

8:30 PM Agassiz School Renovations update



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Rentals • Property Management

Neighborhood News

Agassiz School Building Update



As promised, Ellen Semenoff, Assistant to the City Manager, arranged a meeting between the City Manager, and members of his office with the Task Force on Agassiz School Renovations. The purpose of that meeting will be to determine a process for future school renovation planning and to determine who will be included in the planning. The meeting was held too late to be reported in this edition of *The Whistler*, but a report will be made at the March 19th ANC meeting at 8:30 PM. (See front page for details on the council meeting.) An update report will be provided in the April *Whistler*. For more information, call the council at 349-6297.

Street Sweeping Alert

Mark your calendars now:

APRIL 30 THURSDAY

On this date the odd numbered side of the street in the Agassiz neighborhood will be cleaned by the DPW. This date is not on the 1992 street sweeping list, so make a note of it! The area will be posted a day or two in advance with temporary signs announcing this street cleaning. The even numbered side will be swept on the 3rd Tuesday of April (this year April 21 as it always is).

The April 30 sweep is the result of an Agassiz Neighborhood Council petition to the DPW pleading for an April first sweep odd side every year. Normally, the odd side of our neighborhood doesn't get swept in April because the 3rd Monday is Patriot's Day, leaving the detritus of winter moldering in the gutter for 4 more weeks. Many thanks to the ten Agassiz residents who signed the petition, and special thanks to DPW Commissioner David Haley for being so responsive to our request.

Agassiz Students Identify Car Thief

Looking out the window was a good idea the day a sixth grade student in the Agassiz School watched a thief break into a car parked on Sacramento St. He watched as the thief stole a stereo from the car, and he called over his fellow students and teacher to watch. His teacher sent him to the office to call the police, who eventually found the thief with the stolen property in Harvard Square.

Ms. Koury's entire sixth grade class will receive a special award from Cambridge Police Commissioner Perry Anderson on March 4 at 10 AM in the Agassiz School.

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City Council Committees and Chairs Named

(Clip this and save so you will know who in City Hall is handling your favorite issue)

- Ordinance -Alice Wolf
- Rules-Walter Sullivan
- Health and Hospitals-Frank Duehay
- Rent Control-Jonathan Myers
- Public Safety-Jonathan Myers
- Civil and Human Rights-Alice Wolf
- Public Service-Bill Walsh
- Traffic and Transportation-Ed Cyr
- Veterans -Walter Sullivan
- Economic Development, Training and Employment-Alice Wolf

- Finance -Ed Cyr
- Government Operations-Frank Duehay
- Environment-Frank Duehay
- Housing and Community Development-Ed Cyr
- Human Services and Youth-Jonathan Myers
- Elder Affairs Committee-Sheila Russell
- Claims-Tim Toomey
- Cable TV and Communications-Bill Walsh
- Sister Cities-Jonathan Myers

Update on North Hall Construction

(This report just in from Harvard Law)

This spring, Harvard Law School will begin site improvements at North Hall (formerly the Quality Inn). The removal of the swimming pool has already begun and tree planting on Wendell Street and Massachusetts Ave. will follow this Spring. The new, large community room with kitchen and toilet facilities is currently available to Agassiz Neighborhood Council members until May 26th when installation of the elevator to the community room will begin.

A number of visual and functional improvements will enhance the neighborhood in the following manner. The tall wood fence and brick retaining wall at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Wendell Street will be removed along with the remainder of the pool to make way for a wrought iron and brick pier ornamental fence, landscaping and access for disabled persons to the community room.

The former parking area along Wendell Street will be transformed into a lawn with some shrubbery and street trees. Most of the existing curb cut will be abandoned and a new curb and sidewalk installed for pedestrian safety.

A new masonry canopy at Massachusetts Avenue will define the entrance to the new community room. In addition, an elevator to provide access for disabled persons will be installed next to the new entrance to the community room.

The parking lot area will be improved with the addition of some street trees and an island of trees in the center of the lot. Four parking spaces will be provided for disabled persons and additional spaces will become available to the Mellen Street residents between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. The parking area along Massachusetts Avenue will be enclosed with a wrought iron and brick pier ornamental fence. At the rear of the lot, a wood fence will be erected.

Lastly, in a concerted effort to improve the appearance of the building, a satin finish, dark green paint will be applied as warmer weather approaches. What you currently see is the prime coat.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Happy Green, Director of Community Relations, Harvard University Government, Community and Public Affairs Department, at 495-4955.

Council Programs

Call Steve Winter at 349-6287 for more information, for registration forms, or to visit the programs.

Current Programs

There is still time to sign up for the new **Jazz Dance Class** taught by Marcie Mitler for 10-14 year olds afterschool on Monday in our new community room at 1651 Mass. Ave. Call for information.

Registration for Summer

OUTBACK SUMMER CAMP registration material will be in the mail later this month. You will automatically receive information if your child was enrolled last year or if your child is enrolled in any of our after school programs.

OUTBACK SUMMER CAMP provides day camp for children entering grades 1-6 for eight weeks in July and August behind the Agassiz Community Center. There is a Counselor in Training Program for youth entering 7-9th grades associated with **OUTBACK SUMMER CAMP**. Material on this program will be mailed to all youth who participated last year, as well as all Agassiz students of the appropriate age.

Registration for the Fall

Assignments for Cambridge kindergarten will be coming soon, and the Agassiz Afterschool programs are accepting applications now for both full and part time programs. In previous years you could only register for the part time programs in the fall, but all programs can now be pre-registered.

S·H·E·P·A·R·D D·R·U·G
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An Oxford Street Master Plan

Short-range (1992) goals

- 1) **repainting all existing crosswalks in the "international" style**, i.e., zebra stripes
- 2) **adding zebra stripe crosswalks** across Oxford at Wendell, across Beacon at Oxford, and across Oxford at a newly configured intersection with Beacon
- 3) **getting parking banned 40 feet back from all corners of Oxford & Wendell** (and banning parking for 50-60 feet on the east side of Oxford where the current 40 feet is not enough for drivers trying to pull out of Wendell)
- 4) **getting parking banned 40 feet back on Oxford at Everett**, including prohibition of the strawberry vendor from the NE corner (In an ideal world, Lesley would have been prevented from constructing a dining hall to which deliveries had to be made from Oxford Street!)
- 5) **either a 3-way light at Wendell or 4-way light installed at Everett** (with Harvard assuming some of the cost of the latter since their parking lot generates much of the troublesome traffic on Oxford) to:
 - a) allow pedestrians to cross safely, both Oxford and the side streets
 - b) slow down traffic
 - c) enable cars to pull out safely onto or across Oxford even in poor visibility
 - d) reduce real accidents, close calls, and high levels of anxiety

We should ask for a light at Wendell. A light at Everett could be our fall-back position if Traffic & Parking will under no circumstances install a light at 2 consecutive intersections. If we agree to a light at Everett instead, however, all possible measures must also be taken to make the Wendell intersection safer, i.e., crosswalk(s), cars moved back from all corners, Wendell repaved so that it is higher, and signs like the new one in Union Sq., Somerville, admonishing drivers to defer to pedestrians.

6) Posting Oxford St. as restricted to certain bicyclists who (a) have lights and reflectors and use them, (b) have warning bells and use them to warn pedestrians, (c) wear at least 1 piece of reflective or light-colored clothing, (d) stay off the sidewalk; (e) stop at red lights; (f) signal when turning. Taking the initiative to make Oxford St. "A Bicycle Safe-Way" could be an important first step in dialogue with the citywide Bicycle Committee — a way of saying that we're not going to trade our excess of lawless auto traffic for an increase in devil-may-care bicyclists.

7) Speeding:

- a) that T&P mount more and better speed limit signs at heights and locations agreed upon by the Agassiz Traffic Committee (the first one on Oxford after the Kirkland corner is too high up to be visible; in the block between Everett and Hammond there is none)
- b) that "Thickly settled" signs be added
- c) that the Police Dept. submit to the Agassiz Council a plan in which speeders are monitored and apprehended 30 minutes per day year-round at staggered intervals at unpredictable sites along Oxford, the half hour to include at least 3 times per week the periods 7-9 am and 4:30-6:30 PM.

8) Sustained DPW enforcement of the newly-decriminalized ordinances regarding trash disposal, snow and ice removal from sidewalks, and maintaining Oxford St. and other sidewalks free of botanical obstructions. Effective DPW enforcement (which begins with a warning ticket to the property owner & escalates to tickets that involve monetary fines) must include a readily accessible 24-hour violation reporting hotline.

Long-range goals (1993)

- 1) **Re-paving of Wendell** so that its elevation is not so much lower than Oxford, an important factor in reducing driver ability to see up or down Oxford according to T&P
- 2) **Re-building the RR bridge** at the top of Beacon & Oxford
 - a) so the Rindge Ave./Central Sq. bus can run down Beacon again
 - b) to eliminate the opaque barrier to visibility moving from the bridge onto Elm, Roseland, or Oxford/Beacon Streets.

3) Re-configuring Oxford & Beacon: that concrete plans be developed now by Traffic and Parking and the DPW, in collaboration with Somerville and the ANC, to re-configure the top of Oxford Street so that entering and leaving car and bicycle traffic will not be so haphazard and to provide a safe way for pedestrians to cross both Oxford and Beacon.

4) No closing of Sacramento St: i.e., City support of neighborhood opposition to the closing of Sacramento St. for the Agassiz School renovation, a proposal that would only further convolute a street pattern that is already a maze; dangerously isolate from emergency vehicles an already-isolated and congested Sacramento Place; eliminate residential parking spaces on Sacramento; and physically cement the School Department's dubious claim to part of the Alden Play Area.

5) Continued close collaboration with the bicycle lobby so that Bicycle Committee proposals for Oxford St. as a major artery in a citywide bicycle route are *always* worked on in cooperation with the Agassiz neighborhood and to ensure that city agencies/personnel understand that, despite the Bicycle Report's emphasis, pedestrians feel as threatened by bicyclists in this City as bicyclists feel threatened by cars.

Additional improvements

Not always limited to this neighborhood — designed to make travel by foot (and, by extension, use of public transportation) both safer and more pleasant and to make the co-existence of pedestrians, drivers and bicyclists less adversarial:

1) A citywide ordinance banning bicycling on sidewalks (see Bicycle Report for vague status of law in Cambridge in this regard) that includes specific mention of the illegality of bicyclists using sidewalk handicapped ramps.

2) Adequate signs in the MBTA bus tunnel at Harvard Sq. to accurately & quickly direct No. Cambridge riders to either the 77A trolley bus or the 77 Arlington Heights bus at any time of the day or night [individual complaint already sent to T and to Cambridge representative on the T Board].

3) A crosswalk and possibly traffic light at Sacramento & Beacon across from the Star Market — the site of extremely heavy Cambridge resident foot traffic.

4) Assiduous City collaboration with the MBTA and Baybank to get parked cars out of the Wendell/Mass. Ave. bus stop [Councillor Wolf has already asked city to ask Baybank to find nearby parking elsewhere for its cash machine customers].

5) Harvard, Traffic & Parking, and the Agassiz Council collaboration on design and posting of permanent metal signs at the Museum St. pedestrian entrance to the Harvard parking lot — to replace the temporary paper-and-plastic ones now maintained year round by a member of the ANC traffic committee. (The signs prohibit parking that blocks pedestrian access to and egress from the parking lot.)

6) Municipal clarification of the status of the pedestrian way between Museum and Irving Streets which is much used by neighborhood residents to get to the AAAS park, CRLS and the library. If it is legally a public sidewalk, the DPW should advise the adjacent property owners of their responsibility for snow removal, ice-sanding, and removal of botanical obstructions, and the DPW should itself arrange for adequate lighting of this dark, fence-and-tree lined passageway.

7) Close municipal/MBTA consultation with the Agassiz neighborhood on the temporary and permanent use of the lot at Mass. Ave./Garfield. Its apparent rental by the T this December to a Christmas tree selling operation in direct competition with a longtime neighborhood institution, the Agassiz Community Children's School, was an appallingly insensitive move. In the long-term, the City should be asked to put negotiations with the T for this site on hold until the Agassiz School renovation crisis is resolved.

8) A citywide Walk Light Hot Line should be installed and monitored by the Traffic & Parking Dept. which seems now to have no system whatsoever for handling phoned-in complaints. Walk lights slow to respond, turned in the wrong direction by vandals, or that respond only partially ("Don't Walk" lights but "Walk" doesn't) should be easy to report by the pedestrians who use them and should be fixed within 24 hours.

9) DPW enforcement of the prohibition against botanical obstructions of sidewalks. A heavy increase in botanical beautification by property owners in recent years (municipal, private and institutional) has resulted in obstructions that hazardous to or uncomfortable for pedestrians.

Anyone who would like to add their comments to this draft is welcome to call or write to Astrid Dodds, Traffic Committee c/o Agassiz Neighborhood Council, 20 Sacramento St. 02138, 349-6287.

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What's Happening?

AAP Performances in March

The Agassiz Afterschool Players
invite you to join them at the theatre on:

Saturday March 21 7 PM

Sunday March 22 3:30 PM

Baldwin Hall, Agassiz School, 28 Sacramento St.

(donations gratefully accepted at the door)

The AAP Stage II group will present an original musical, entitled "REVUE 92". The show was created by Carol Hantman, Director, and Ada Park Snider, Musical Director, with input from all the participants. This term the players were lucky to have Kathy Woods, well known Boston actress, join the talented teaching team.

"REVUE 92" is a series of musical skits that highlight the humor, anguish and expectations of pre adolescent youth. The cast includes: Maya Antic, Rachel Applebaum, Melina Avery, Jessica Butler, Hannah Carlson, Ned Colby, Gio Gaynor, Emily Griffin, Nate Gundy, Sarah Groff, Tamar Leffert, Bushra Makiya, Aaron Novod, Sean Ragon, Rafi Soifer, Michael Sullivan, Evan Zeisel, James DeLancey, Kate Kindleberger, Sidonie Pierce, Luc Schuster and Claire Singer.

The Stage I Players will present two original dramas. "The Case of the Empty Case" is the third in our series of gumshoe mysteries. Written by members of the cast under the direction of Carol Hantman, performers include: Lucy Lindsey, Justine Nagurney, Evan Regan, Margaret Levy, Kate Silver-Heilman, Kate Kochman, Joanna Levy, Michael Littenberg-Brown, Makkin Lynch, Jonathan Meltzer, Susanna Colby, Caitlin Bergin.

"You Better Not Tell" was written by and features: Vera Broekhuysen, Maria Hemphill Harris, Gregory Maher, Mako Takahashi Parker, Andrew Power-Koch, Jack Robinson, Layla Schlack, Amira Soifer, Claire Blumenson, and Menna Zaghloul.

Stage I assistants are: Rebecca Tortello and Lorin Van Wagner.

... At the Sacramento St. Gallery

The SACRAMENTO ST. GALLERY will exhibit "NEW WORKS by BARRY BENT" beginning March 6 through March 27. There will be an opening reception on Saturday March 14th between 4-7 PM. The gallery, located at 20 Sacramento St., is open weekdays between 9 AM and 5 PM.

These paintings mark a departure for Boston artist Bent, who has been known as a sculptor for the past 20 years. His large metal sculpture has been exhibited on both coasts, among other prizes and honors Bent was named a Finalist in the Massachusetts Artist Foundation Grants in 1989. Bent is the subject of an interview in the March 1990 issue of ART DYNAMO magazine.

Bent studied painting in the 1960's at the Art Institute of Boston and the San Francisco Art Institute. This return to his original medium is not so far afield for Bent, who says, "The ideas are the same, the work is simply two dimensional instead of three-dimensional."

North Prospect Church Presents A Public Concert Series

The North Prospect Church, located at 1803 Mass. Ave. is presenting a series of concerts on the First Friday of each month at Noon. A light lunch is provided by Marcella's, and a donation is requested at the door. On March 6, there will be a concert of popular jazz with Morton Hyams, Piano and Herman Johnson, Saxophone.

.....
• **Playwrights Platform** We have enjoyed the
• events made available to the neighborhood, but the
• Playwrights Platform will be returning to their original
• home at the Mass. College of Art this month. They
• are planning to continue some events here, and we
• will keep you informed.
•

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The Gundy Family of Gorham St. would like to announce
the arrival of a baby boy, Aaron Gundy

Community Announcements

Cambridge Performance Project Events
Voices from the Back Porch

Celebrate International Women's Day at the Multicultural Arts Center in East Cambridge and see an unusual dance performance on March 6 and 7 at 8 PM, March 8 at 2 PM. The center is located at 41 2nd St. and tickets can be reserved by calling 577-1400. Prices are \$8 (\$6 seniors).

The Cambridge Performance Project and the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center present *Voices from the Back Porch*, an intergenerational dance/theatre piece in celebration of older women. It is performed by 14 dancers from ages 16 to 73, choreographed by Joan Green and Victoria Solomon with music by Elise Letomnean.

Chocolate Fools Day

This event scheduled for Sunday March 15 from 1-4 PM in the Ballroom of the Charles Hotel, is a benefit for the Cambridge Performance Project. There will be many chocolate creations by Cambridge restaurants and bakeries to sample, a raffle, celebrity judges and chocolate awards. Tickets cost \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door, \$8 for seniors and reserved groups. Call 661-5865 for more information.

Marcie Mitler, M.Ed Offers Courses

Various offerings are available for women with histories of sexual abuse and violence. Programs will be formed around needs of participants.

Classes will be held at the Cambridge YWCA, Tuesdays 6:30-8 PM, Wednesdays 9:30-11 AM. A one day workshop will be held on Sunday March 15 from 1-4 PM (register by 3/10). A support group will begin on March 2 from 7:30-8:30 the first Monday of the month for 12 weeks.

For fees and information call Marcie Mitler at 497-5283.

Maria Baldwin Rededication Tape Sought

Kaye Cox, past Principal of the Agassiz School, is looking for a videotape of the Maria Louise Baldwin Rededication Celebration held at the Agassiz School in March of 1990. If you have a tape of that night's program or any part of it, we would like to copy it. Please call the council at 349-6287.

Neighborhood Condo for Sale

2/3 bedrooms/15,000± sf/1.5 baths/2nd and 3rd floors of a 2 family; sunny; deck; parking; very near Agassiz. \$185,000. Call Anne Strong 491-4684



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Community Calendar

March 3 Tuesday	8-10 AM	Farewell Breakfast for Marcia Duran Agassiz School Library 28 Sacramento St. Call 349-6287 for information
March 12 Thursday	12:45 PM	Agassiz School Early Release Day
March 14 Saturday	4-7 PM	Opening-New Works by Barry Bent Sacramento St. Gallery 20 Sacramento ST.
March 17 Tuesday		ST. PATRICK'S DAY HOLIDAY NO SCHOOL
March 19 Thursday	7:30 PM	Agassiz Neighborhood Council Meeting Agassiz Community Center 20 Sacramento St. (see agenda pg. 1)
March 21 Saturday and	7:00 PM	Agassiz Afterschool Players Performances Baldwin Hall, Agassiz School, 28 Sacramento St.
March 22 Sunday	3:30 PM	Revue 92, <i>The Case of the Empty Case</i> and <i>You Better Not Tell</i> .

March 1992



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Agassiz Neighborhood Council
20 Sacramento St.
Cambridge, MA 02138 349-6287

DO NOT FORWARD