

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

May 2017

IN THIS ISSUE

ANC: Sharing Daytime Parking to Support Merchants, New Construction Projects, Assisting Local Businesses, Pedestrian Walk Signal at Wendell St. & Mass. Ave., Upcoming Walking Opportunities 1-6

Community: Annual Meeting & 2017 Board Slate & Volunteer Thank You, Sacramento Field Renovation Update, Save the Date - Backyard Block Party 7-8

Living Well: Spring Social, Housing Task Force 8-9

City Wide: Common Exchange - Performing the Cambridge Common 9

character of sidewalk paving, and improving the quality and health of street trees.

The residents, referred to as the Mass. Ave. Improvement Committee, presented these design elements to the City as a Master Plan for Mass. Ave. The city agreed to begin with a Demonstration Block on the west side of the Ave. from Shepard Street to Garfield Street, in summer 2014. At three locations, the sidewalk was widened by curb extensions and two eating and art areas (designed by Ross Miller) were installed. The artistic elements were funded by a grant from the Cambridge Agassiz Harvard (CAH) Fund.

Currently, the remaining members of the original Committee have turned their attention to bolstering the retail environment, which includes addressing parking availability.

“The businesses say there’s not enough parking.”

ANC News

NOTES FROM THE APR. 11 MEETING

Sharing Daytime Parking to Support Merchants on Mass. Ave.

“We’re looking to take some next steps in a community-based effort to improve Mass. Ave. between the Cambridge Common and Porter Square,” stated Stephen Diamond, long-time Agassiz resident and former ANC Meeting Chair.

In 2010 a group of residents, including Mr. Diamond, Fred Meyer, and Carol Weinhaus of Agassiz; Ruth Ryals, Ronald Axelrod and Dennis Carlone of Neighborhood 9; and Charlie Christopher, co-owner of Cambridge Common, Christopher’s, and West Side Lounge, worked to identify elements that could improve Mass. Ave.’s overall character and ‘streetscape.’ These included the availability and safety of pedestrian crossings, traffic at intersections, the quality and

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



MAY 9 - 7:30 PM

Maud Morgan Arts
20A Sacramento Street

Annual Meeting

The Council will vote to approve the slate for the 2017 ABC Board of Directors. All are invited to attend and meet the Board.

Volunteer Thank You & Ice Cream Social

Following the Annual Meeting, join us at 8:00 PM for an ice cream social in appreciation and recognition of our volunteers.

explained Mr. Diamond, “So we are considering a few ideas to increase availability for shop owners and customers. Some owners feed the meter all day, which of course could lead to a parking ticket and takes up a space customers might use.”

As many “resident parking permit only” side streets are mostly empty of cars while residents are at work or elsewhere, one idea is to issue a special permit intended for businesses. This permit would be valid only during business hours and would allow shop owners or their employees to utilize available resident spaces, leaving more metered spaces for shoppers.

A second idea would be to add three to four metered spaces at each street that intersects with Mass. Ave., which then convert back to residential use after business hours. In Agassiz, Mr. Diamond counted around 24 possible spaces that might be a good fit for this option.

Council Response

“We’re trying to get feedback from the community on how they feel about these ideas,” stated Mr. Diamond.

Council members and guests responded with interest and some reservations, including:

- Keeping important sight-lines and fire hydrant access clear
- Retaining space that allows for school buses and large vehicles to maneuver around corners (Mr. Diamond responded: “We would avoid the corners, since that’s a safety issue.”)
- Experiment to see what works best
- Publicize that vehicles can legally park in Commercial Loading Zones for 15 minutes

“The easiest thing to do would be to take the commercial district (approximately 100 feet deep on either side of Mass. Ave.) and add four to five metered parking spaces,” suggested City Councillor Dennis Carlone. “One way to do it

is to try a few streets at a time. Inman Square & Observatory Hill neighbors are considering similar changes as well.

“Another thing to consider is drop-offs and delivery for businesses. Cambridge has been considering doing a loading/delivery study, and I want the City to temporarily install cameras to see what’s going on during the day. There’s momentum for supporting the local business community right now, such as a move by the City to reduce small business taxes.”

Astrid Dodds, long-time Agassiz resident, stated, “There are many things to consider. Streets around here have a lot of custom tinkering.”

Mr. Diamond agreed, “Each street has a story and they’re all different.”

Feedback Wanted!

Responses to these shared-parking ideas can be sent to Mr. Diamond, care of ANC by emailing psinclair@agassiz.org or calling (617) 349-6287 x10.

Mass. Ave. ‘Master Plan’ Construction Update

Beginning in a few weeks, Cambridge will be doing construction on Mass. Ave. between Lancaster St. and Upland Rd. in Neighborhood 9. This work will incorporate the new design elements established by residents and the City, which can be viewed at the Mass. Ave. Demo Block between Shepard and Garfield.

To learn more about the Linnaean/Upland work, visit: bit.ly/mass_ave_reconstruction

Learn More

Read about the initial discussions around creating a plan for Mass. Ave. in *The Whistler*:

- bit.ly/april_whistler_2010
- bit.ly/june_whistler_2010

Learn more on the ABC website:

- bit.ly/mass_ave_improvements_report_2010

- bit.ly/mass_ave_improvements_begin
- bit.ly/mass_ave_demo_block_update_2014

Learn more on the City of Cambridge website:

- bit.ly/lower-mass-ave-plan

View photos on the Massavenue: The Avenue in Pictures blog: massavenue.wordpress.com

New Construction Projects

Construction Schedule for New Harvard Building

A new building is to be constructed at 1607-1615 Mass. Ave., corner of Mass. Ave. & Everett St. The site was formerly occupied by Central Barber, 3 Aces Pizza, Crimson Cleaners, Fancy Fingers, and Looks clothing boutique, but has been vacant since 2007 while Harvard conducts a remediation process to remove dry cleaning solvent contamination beneath the structure and street.

The existing building will be torn down and the new building will mostly house legal offices related to Harvard Law School, as well as ground floor retail. Designs were presented at a Harvard-hosted community open house in June 2016.

Specs include:

- 4 floors (the building will be shorter than nearby Wasserstein Hall)
- Approximately 20,000 square feet:
 - 12,000 feet reserved for a legal aid program (currently in Wasserstein Hall) and other programmatic uses such as policy and research
 - Ground floor of the building reserved for retail use
- One loading space and no additional parking

Central Barber will remain in the separate small brick building that is part of the condos located behind it.

The construction schedule is as follows:

March 2017- July 2017: Environmental Remediation Activities

July 2017: Site mobilization for demolition and construction of the new building

August 2017: Demolition activities; site work and building foundations

August 2017-December 2017: Steel erection

December 2017: Structural steel completed; façade installation begins

February 2018: Building will be weather tight; interior fit-out begins

May 2018: Façade work completed

Summer of 2018: Landscaping and finish work

September 2018: Final Completion

New Residential Building

A new building will be constructed at 1699 Mass. Ave. formerly the Changsho Restaurant parking lot.

Specs include:

- 3-stories tall and contain 20 one, two and three-bedroom residential units as well as 1600 square feet of ground floor retail space
- Underground parking
- Variance from Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeal for underground parking and relocation of a curb cut

Learn more in the May 2016 edition of *The Whistler*: bit.ly/may_whistler_2016

Assisting Local Businesses

In addition to creative strategies to generate more parking, Ruth Ryals and Stephen Diamond discussed other efforts to support local businesses.

Ms. Ryals, Neighborhood 9 resident, Co-Chair of the Committee for Art on the Avenue, and member of the Mass. Ave. Improvement Committee, noted that parking can be an issue in the evening for restaurants, as well as for shoppers who stop at multiple stores on Mass. Ave.

She posed several questions:

- Is there a way to work with businesses and condos to set up a valet system for restaurants at night?
- Could we arrange to use the Guidance Center parking lot in the evenings?

Ms. Ryals stated, “We realize there are liability and zoning issues. With an established business association, these questions could be worked out in a more organized way with other stakeholders.”

John Sullivan, Director of Communications at Lesley University, noted that there is some parking behind the Lesley’s University Hall building (1815 Mass. Ave.).

“This is an important issue for the city,” agreed Councillor Carlone. “We need to be very firm and have strong design guidelines. Perhaps even mandating that local small business requirements are included in the zoning. We can still make a difference.”

Ms. Ryals also reported on efforts to develop a local business association for shops between Cambridge Common and Porter Square. A proposal, written by the owner of Susana, (a women’s clothing store at 1776 Mass. Ave.), was submitted to the Cambridge Economic Development Department to establish a small business association. The association would create opportunities for businesses to better communicate with one another, to raise awareness with the abutting neighborhoods, to organize events like their annual sidewalk sale.

Although the city failed to fund the request, Ms. Ryals and Mr. Diamond believe the businesses will proceed, using dues to self-fund their association. Next steps include setting dues levels, formalizing a budget, electing officers, and setting goals. The intent is to form a very simple organization, since most of the businesses are owner-operated and often short of time and staff. The emphasis is not on formal meetings,

but on email and social media connections, as well as on the creation of a social media identity.

“We need to find ways to help our small local business survive if they are threatened with displacement due to development,” Ms. Ryals concluded.

Q&A

Q: Is there any buy-in from the businesses?

A: Yes. However, many business owners don’t have a lot of extra time or money.

Q: There are no U-turns on Mass. Ave. and that seems detrimental for the businesses. Also, the traffic then gets sent into neighborhoods. Would the City be open to changing this rule?

A: (Councillor Carlone): Part of the problem is that, when people stop to make a U-turn, they hold up the traffic behind them. That said, let’s make a list of ideas and sit down and talk.

Shop/Eat on Mass. Ave. Map

Porter Square Neighbors Association (PSNA) publishes a fold-out map of businesses along Mass. Ave. from the Charles River to Arlington. Last updated in 2015, it’s due to be revised again soon. Copies of the previous version of the map are available at 20 Sacramento Street. PSNA is currently seeking funding to re-print the map. Also, if you can help with distribution, contact Ms. Ryals at: rryals@comcast.net.

Learn More

Download a copy of the small business association position statement:
bit.ly/small_business_assoc

Pedestrian Walk Signal at Wendell St. & Mass. Ave.

Astrid Dodds, long-time Agassiz resident and pedestrian advocate, identified problems with changes to the pedestrian walk signal at the corner of Wendell St. & Mass. Ave. In January

2017, the Traffic Dept. changed the walk signal timing at Mass. & Wendell to “concurrent.” The new setting invites pedestrians to cross Mass. Ave. while vehicles exit left or right from Wendell St., competing with pedestrians. Between January and March, Ms. Dodds polled neighbors and others, and corresponded with Joe Barr, Director of Traffic, Parking & Transportation for Cambridge.

In the survey sent via Community Notice email and *The Whistler*, six responders approved of the change and thirteen did not. Ms. Dodds shared copies of these responses with Mr. Barr, and excerpts can be read in the March 2017 *Whistler*.

“The city said they made this change to make life better for pedestrians, but I can’t figure out what was wrong with the signal as it was,” Ms. Dodds stated. “I’ve been crossing Mass. Ave. at Wendell & Shepard for 50 years, but I haven’t crossed in the south crosswalk between North Hall and Marathon Sports since January 20th. The city says there’s lead-time for pedestrians, but that’s not my experience and I’ve gotten testimonials from others who’ve had trouble crossing Mass. Ave. If the city thinks it is improving conditions for pedestrians, it’s not.”

She cited the city’s web page on Concurrent Pedestrian Signals, which states: “As noted in the Policy, there are some exceptions to this policy. Most notably, at T intersections, where all vehicles turn left or right onto the main street, a concurrent signal is not feasible. Second, where the number of turning vehicles is very high, we may choose to use exclusive operation.” (bit.ly/cambMA_ped_signals)

“This was a problem 10-15 years ago,” Ms. Dodds stated. “Then there was enough objection from the neighborhood for the signal to be converted back. I’d like to know, from the city, what inspired them to reconsider. Additionally, the metal sign on the corner of Mass. Ave. and Wendell warning motorists to

watch for pedestrians is mounted below the 7’ height limit state regulation specifies. It is a hazard for people on the sidewalk.”



Council Response

Fred Meyer, ANC

Moderator responded that any signage should prioritize the safety of pedestrians, “I agree that signs aren’t the solution, but they help.”

Kate Frank of Crescent St. stated, “The part I found most interesting in *The Whistler* were the snippets of people’s experiences. I’ve seen an increasingly large number of people running red lights [in the city]. This could be related to distracted driving.”

Ted Live of Wendell St. stated, “I think a benefit [of the change to concurrent] is that traffic does move faster on Wendell and pedestrians do have a shorter wait. I haven’t seen any issues there. To me, there’s no more of a problem than there was before. As someone who lives halfway down Wendell St., I’m glad to have fewer cars idling outside my house.”

Councillor Carlone added, “I think this change puts more pedestrians in danger.”

Ms. Dodds concluded, “One of my issues is that my city is telling me that they did this for my benefit. However, what’s there now makes me feel unsafe.”

Next Steps

Ms. Dodds will compose a one-page petition to be signed by people who feel that the concurrent signal is a problem. To sign the letter or share feedback, contact Ms. Dodds at: astrid.dodds@earthlink.net.

Lean More

- bit.ly/march_whistler_2017
- bit.ly/february_whistler_2017

Upcoming Walking Opportunities**Organize a Neighborhood Tour**

WalkBoston, a local advocacy group seeking to “encourage better health, a cleaner environment, and vibrant communities” invites residents to organize a neighborhood tour during the first week of May as part of the international Jane’s Walk movement. Although it’s too late to organize for the 2017, if anyone in the Agassiz Neighborhood would like to plan a 2018 Jane’s Walk, contact Phoebe Sinclair, Community Liaison, at (617) 349-6287 x10 or psinclair@agassiz.org. Some topics to focus on might be highlighting alternate modes of transportation, discussing favorite portions of Mass. Ave., or identifying nearby historical sites.

Learn more at:

<http://janeswalk.org/united-states/boston>

<http://www.walkboston.org>

Walk to Bunker Hill (Re-creating 1775 Agassiz)

Prepared by Fred Meyer, ANC Meeting Moderator

Fred Meyer invites anyone interested to join him on the historical walk he’ll be making on **Saturday, June 17, 2017 (Bunker Hill Day)**. A tiny group, specifically including seniors like him, will walk the 3 ¼ miles to Bunker Hill . . . (at a leisurely pace with frequent stops) from the very spot, right in our Agassiz Neighborhood, where, on June 16, 1775, 1,200 volunteer citizen soldiers gathered to march and meet the British troops occupying Boston.

Google indicates it’s a 3¼ mile, 1 hour 15 minute walk . . . but with our easy pace and three stops for rest and refreshment, it will probably take us over twice that long.

237 years ago, after marching at dusk, the volunteer militia dug trenches in a hilly area all night, and then, the next day, Saturday, June 17, 1775, fought what we now call ‘The Battle of Bunker Hill’. Their route begins at our easily-missed little local monument, near the Harvard

Underpass, continuing to follow Kirkland Street until the name changes, at the Somerville line, to Washington . . . and then, near Union Square, runs directly onto Bunker Hill Avenue in Charlestown.

Fred’s wife will pick the walkers up at the Monument, so everyone will get a nice ride back. She’ll gladly give everyone who falters a free ride back from any point en route, too. The car holds five, so there’ll be room for up to three more people.

Only about half of the original soldiers made the trip back alive and without serious injuries. The least we can do is, once in a while, honor our neighborhood’s unique history . . . and predecessors’ memory. We’re so fortunate. 100% of our little group will return safely . . . perhaps even a little healthier.

By the way: sixteen days later, on July 3, 1775, George Washington arrived at our Cambridge Common, up from Virginia, to begin turning those ragtag volunteers into a real army for what became a new nation.

If you’d enjoy more information on our Agassiz/Revolutionary War connection, see Fred’s historical article on the subject at: bit.ly/howl_october_2016 (page 10)

To view Agassiz’s 1775 / 2017 route, just Google: “Harvard University Littauer Center to Bunker Hill Street, Charlestown.”



Fred Meyer & Stephen Diamond



Community

ANNUAL MEETING & 2017 BOARD SLATE

Please join us Tuesday, May 9th, for our Annual Meeting. The council will vote to approve the slate (below) for the 2017 Board of Directors. Everyone is welcome to attend and meet the Board.

NEW this year, we will be thanking our dedicated volunteers! See below for additional information.

When: Tuesday, May 9, 7:30 PM
Where: Maud Morgan Arts,
20A Sacramento St.

Board Slate

Officers for a one-year term:

Andrea Walsh, Co-Chair, Eustis St.
Miriam Goldberg, Co-Chair, Frost St.
Hull Fulweiler, Clerk, Howland St.
Jonathan Lehrich, Treasurer, Cogswell Ave.

Board Directors for a two-year term:

Stephen Diamond, Frost St.
Hull Fulweiler, Howland St.
Sue Kriegsmann, Crescent St.
Jonathan Lehrich, Cogswell Ave.
Wendy Prellwitz, Wendell St.

Director in mid-term:

Fred Meyer, Hammond St.

Nominating Committee:

Joel Bard
Terry DeLancey
George Hein

Volunteer Thank You & Ice Cream Social

Following the Annual Meeting, join us for an ice cream social in appreciation and recognition of

our volunteers! We couldn't do the work that we do without all the amazing people like you who help make Agassiz Baldwin Community and Maud Morgan Arts successful. Come have a scoop of ice cream as our way of saying thank you.

When: Tuesday, May 9th, 8:00 PM
Where: Maud Morgan Arts,
20A Sacramento Street

Please RSVP for the Volunteer Thank You by replying to psinclair@agassiz.org.

SACRAMENTO FIELD RENOVATION UPDATE – SPRING 2017

Prepared by Cambridge Public Works

During the week of April 18, the city's contractor, J&J Sacca, began renovation activities at Sacramento Field. Improvements will be ongoing, weather permitting, throughout the spring, summer, and fall.

The improvements include:

- Two park entrances
- Improved open space to support active and passive activities.
- StaLok circular path around the field
- New enclosed tot lot
- Nature-based play area
- Sacramento St. Community Garden improvements including new gates, fences, message board and raised planter beds.
- New seating areas
- Landscaping improvements
- Multi-use hard surface ball court
- Drainage and stormwater management improvements
- Other improvements including bike parking, water fountain, message board, historical marker, and benches

Project Schedule

In the upcoming weeks, crews will set up the perimeter construction fencing and gates to secure the site. Once that is complete, they will

begin the site improvements. Activities include electrical conduit installation, underground water and drainage improvements, new path, play equipment and seating installation, community garden walkway layout and construction, and landscaping. Please note that all work is weather dependent. We expect the field to reopen this fall and will continue to provide updates as the construction progresses.

What to Expect during Renovations

The field will be closed during the renovations. No Parking signs will be posted along Sacramento St.; please be sure to check dates and times. Work hours will be 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Information and Assistance

We apologize in advance for any inconvenience you may experience during this work.

For questions or concerns regarding this project, please contact Kelly Dunn, DPW Community Relations Manager, at (617) 349-4870 or kdunn@cambridgema.gov or Jane Demoulas, Project Manager, at (617) 349-4871 or jdemoulas@cambridgema.gov.

Please also visit the City’s website for additional information on the field improvements at: bit.ly/dpw_sacramento_field

SAVE THE DATE: BACKYARD BLOCK PARTY

Come celebrate our community and the arts at our sixth annual Backyard Block Party --FREE!

What: Backyard Block Party
When: Saturday, June 10th, 1:00-4:00 PM
Where: 20 Sacramento St., back yard

Enjoy:

- Activities for all ages that inspire artistic expression
- Performances

- Giant bubbles
- Balloons
- Hooping
- Imagination Playground big, blue blocks
- Bocce games on our regulation size court
- Hooping
- Snacks
- Chances to win fun prizes

Check out photos from last year’s event: bit.ly/bybp_photos_2016



Living Well Network

LIVING WELL NETWORK SPRING SOCIAL

Join us for a casual spring evening of hors d’oeuvres, music, and conversation to celebrate the Living Well Network (LWN) community, a grassroots resource for adults over 55. Meet the new LWN Coordinator Diane Martin!

When: May 16, 5:00-7:00 PM
Where: Chandler Gallery, 20 Sacramento Street
RSVP: Sign up via Eventbrite at bit.ly/lwn_social_2017, email dmartin@agassiz.org, or leave a message at (617) 349-6287 x21

This free event is in a mobility accessible space. Bring a friend, neighbor, or anyone you would like to introduce to the Living Well Network. LWN is social, intellectual, and creative interplay, as well as people coming together to

discuss and plan for Aging in Place and other issues that are key to our neighborhood and throughout Cambridge. LWN offers volunteer opportunities and affordable computer classes, technology in-home assistance, yoga, Tai Chi, and art classes.



As we look ahead, LWN hopes to add programming and activities that are relevant to you. We're beginning in-depth conversations regarding the housing challenges of aging in Cambridge and becoming advocates for positive change to improve our neighborhood and city.

LIVING WELL NETWORK HOUSING TASK FORCE

The LWN Housing Task Force meets the first and third Thursdays of the month to discuss housing issues for Cambridge residents wishing to remain in Cambridge as they age. Topics include financial barriers, zoning, downsizing, senior housing options in Cambridge, house-sharing, turning a single-family home into one of two or more apartments, affordable housing for young families, etc.

We hope you can join us at the next meeting.

- When:** Thursday, May 18th, 3:00-4:30 PM
- Where:** North Hall Community Room, 1651 Mass. Ave, Cambridge (basement level, accessible by elevator)

For more information, contact LWN Coordinator Diane Martin at dmartin@agassiz.org or (617) 349-6287 x21.

City Wide

COMMON EXCHANGE - PERFORMING THE CAMBRIDGE COMMON

- What:** Opening Event and Performances on the Common
- When:** Saturday, May 13th, 3:00-6:00 PM
- What:** Park Installations and Performances
- When:** May 13-September 17, 2017
- What:** Gallery 344 Exhibitions
- When:** April 24-December, 2017

Beginning in May, Cambridge Arts will present Common Exchange, a series of art installations, performances, and exhibitions in and around the Cambridge



Common that highlights the historic green as a connective space: a space defined by the exchange of ideas, words, and things—a space of conversation. Organized in honor of the park's recent pathway renovations, time-based and participatory projects will take place over five months and include the work of ten artists: Andy Graydon, Paul Ramirez Jonas, Carmen Papalia, Aki Sasamoto, Kelly Sherman, Xaviera Simmons, Allison Smith, Julianne Swartz, Lee Walton, and Jon Rubin. Common Exchange is organized by guest curator Dina Deitsch and Cambridge Arts Director of Public Art Lillian Hsu.

Through exhibitions, performances, installations, and a special edition newspaper designed by the Lesley University Community Design Studio, Common Exchange will reframe the experience of the Cambridge Common for the public.

Learn more at: bit.ly/common_exchange

Community Calendar

May 2017

Tuesday, May 9	7:30-9:00 PM	Annual Meeting (see page 1 for agenda) Maud Morgan Arts, 20A Sacramento St. All are welcome, please join us!
Wednesday, May 10	6:00-7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting, 20 Sacramento St, 2nd Floor Public welcome
Saturday, May 13 & Sunday May 14	12:00-6:00 PM	Cambridge Open Studios at Maud Morgan Arts For information, visit: bit.ly/cos_MA_2017
Tuesday, May 16	5:00-7:00 PM	LWN Spring Social, 20 Sacramento St., Chandler Gallery
Thursday, May 18	3:00-4:30 PM	Living Well Network Housing Task Force Meeting, North Hall Community Room, 1651 Mass. Ave.
Saturday, May 20	5:30-9:00 PM	Baldwin Blooms Fundraiser, 20 Sacramento St., back yard Tickets info: www.baldwinblooms.com

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.

The Whistler May 2017



Agassiz Neighborhood Council
20 Sacramento Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
P: (617) 349-6287 F: (617) 497-4388

DO NOT FORWARD



@agassizbaldwin
@maudmorganarts



/agassizbaldwin
/maudmorganarts