

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

September 2013

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ANC News

NOTES FROM THE JUNE MEETING

Police Revamp Neighborhood Sergeants Program

“We’re in the process of revamping the Cambridge Police Department’s (CPD) Neighborhood Sergeants Program,” stated Jacquelyn Rose, the new Director of Outreach and Community Programs. “In the next few months, I’ll be contacting neighborhood groups to learn how you prefer to receive information and how often you would like CPD to hold community meetings.”

The Neighborhood Sergeants Program is comprised of two police representatives for each of Cambridge’s thirteen neighborhoods. The sergeants work closely with officers, hold community meetings, and attend community events.

Ms. Rose, who is responsible for the program’s ongoing coordination, implementation, and evaluation, explained, “In the next few weeks, CPD will complete the process of assigning new officers and placing existing officers with neighborhoods that are a good fit.”

Q&A

Q: Are the police notified when an alarm goes off in a building?

A: If the building’s management company has a security service, they will contact the police if necessary. If CPD doesn’t hear from a security service, they always respond to an alarm.

Additionally, CPD offers free residential and commercial security assessments. To learn more, visit the Community Relations Unit online at bit.ly/cpd-resources or call (617) 349-3236.

Q: What’s the police’s non-emergency number?

A: In the event of an emergency, always call 911. Call (617) 349-3300 for non-emergencies.

NSTAR Explains Power Outages

Bill Zamparelli, NSTAR Gas & Electric Community Relations Representative responded

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



SEPT 10- 7:30 PM

Maud Morgan Arts
20A Sacramento Street
2D Studio, 2nd Floor

Agenda:

- Should Agassiz become a **Historical Conservation District?**
- Update on the **Cambridge Police Review & Advisory Board**
- Efforts to improve/rebuild the Northwest Science Building **Fire Command Center**
- Introducing **Cambridge City Council** candidates

to questions about frequent electrical outages in the neighborhood. As requested by the Council, he reported on a number of outages dating back to September 2012, including unscheduled outages and some that occurred during daytime hours.

Sample outages in 2012:

- 9/18 Replaced an oil switch
- 10/12 Permit outage (customers contacted via letter or a phone blast)
- 10/29 Service disrupted due to a fallen tree

“As a public utility we fix, repair, and improve the system daily,” Mr. Zamparelli stated. “We work to meet the growing demands in the city. Most recently, we’ve been replacing oil switches (used to stop and start the flow of electricity) that were installed in the 1930s and 1940s, which manufacturers say are no longer safe.”

When Mr. Zamparelli first visited the Council in April 2011, he explained how NSTAR uses redundant systems that allow them to isolate areas and switch power around. Over the past three to four years, the utility has been transitioning from a manual to an automated process. Switches are installed during scheduled maintenance or unplanned outages, with most of the work completed between 1:00 and 5:00 AM. Some switches are located overhead on telephone poles, but most are underground.

“In Cambridge, the manholes are small,” he explained. “So we have to expand or add manholes to fit the new switches. We’ve been systematically working our way through the city, replacing all the switches. About a year ago approximately 400 switches needed to be replaced, now 200-250 remain.”

Mr. Zamparelli reminded the Council that, while new oil switches will help decrease the occurrence and duration of electrical outages, some outages result from problems with cables and other aspects of the system.

“Quite truthfully, Cambridge has a very robust system,” he stated. “I work with the city and DPW all the time to coordinate, and we are building additional capacity in the city to address increased need.”

Council Response

The Council thanked Mr. Zamparelli for his report and requested the following:

- Please provide a full year’s list of Agassiz neighborhood outages and explanations to the Council
- Provide a projection for how long it will take to upgrade the remaining oil switches in the city
- Consider including the reasons for and location of outages when notifying residents

Residents are welcome to contact Mr. Zamparelli with issues or questions. He can be reached at William.Zamparelli@nstar.com or (617) 369-5532.

Proposal for Trains Carrying Ethanol Through Cambridge

Cambridge City Councillor Minka vanBeuzekom provided details about a proposal regarding the transport of ethanol, alcohol derived from corn that is used for fuel and other purposes, through the city to a blending facility in Revere operated by Global Partners (GLP), an American energy supply company headquartered in Waltham, MA. Many nearby communities have expressed safety concerns and a number have moved to openly oppose GLP’s efforts.

History

GLP has operated an ethanol-gasoline gas blending facility in Revere for decades, receiving ethanol from the Midwest by barge from Providence, RI. In February 2011, GLP requested an expansion of their license to operate adjacent to Chelsea Creek, a waterway along the Chelsea shore used by oil tankers. This request triggered evaluation by the Department of Environmental Protection and Revere’s Conservation Commission.

Why Trains?

According to Councillor vanBeuzekom, GLP has purchased additional gas stations and is petitioning the federal government to increase the mandated percentage of ethanol added to gasoline. It's less expensive for GLP to transport ethanol by rail; however this method of shipment would significantly shift the risk and burden onto the cities and towns through which the trains travel.

Local Response

The Mayor of Cambridge appointed Councillor vanBeuzekom to the Department of Transportation's Ethanol Advisory Group, a task force studying the issue. The group worked for three months, reviewing safety and possible train routes, as well as spoke with public safety representatives, elected officials, and others.

"One possible route would take ethanol trains along the Fitchburg line, past Cambridge Co-housing, Walden Street, and many homes and businesses in Cambridge and Somerville," stated Councillor vanBeuzekom. "Should an incident occur, the standard safety precautions are to evacuate a half-mile radius. If the ethanol is transported along the Fitchburg line, that half-mile radius would affect around thirty thousand people, depending on the time of day, and including the Agassiz neighborhood."

Key recommendations from the Ethanol Advisory Group:

- Tracks need to be maintained as class 3 (passenger/freight)
- Speeds should be as slow as possible (40 MPH is legal max)
- Replace DOT-111 tanker cars for transport
- At-grade crossings need updating, including several in Cambridge
- Regional purchase of alcohol resistant foam, foam tenders (apparatus that carry large amounts of foam), and training for local responders
- Department of Homeland Security and local fire departments need to be knowledgeable of shipment timing and risks

Items for local governments and stakeholders to consider include:

- Federal Surface Transportation Board controls interstate freight. Localities don't have the power to require additional safety and security measures.
- A few cities and states that have challenged pre-emption regulations have lost in court.
- Who pays for emergency preparedness (approximately \$2,000,000 initially)?
- Who pays for upgrades?
- Who pays for additional insurance requirements? (Would nearby businesses need to take out extra insurance?)
- Why thrust this risk on a dense urban population?

"GLP is lobbying hard at the state house," Councillor vanBeuzekom added. "We've had some positive momentum in opposition. I want to stress that this is a regional issue. Even if Cambridge convinced GLP to go through other towns, it wouldn't be appropriate. We want to be safe as a town and as a region, and we don't want highly flammable materials going through any of our communities."

Concerns and Actions

- Regional cooperation against rail transport is needed
- State Senate passed budget amendment
- Heightened awareness of terrorist risk
- Very high number of Environmental Justice Communities are affected
- Likelihood of spill or catastrophe is very low

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The Whistler newsletter is a neighborhood based vehicle for getting out the word about your business or service. Ads start at \$50 per month for business-card-size.

Learn more: bit.ly/whistler-advertising

- MBTA must upgrade tracks and insist on replacing DOT-111 cars
- Regional firefighters will train and prepare
- Emergency responders will upgrade evacuation plans

Opportunities to Get Involved

In Person

- Contact federal legislators and Governor Deval Patrick at (617) 725-4005
- Contact Ways and Means Legislators; www.malegislature.gov/Committees/Senate/S30
- Make connections in nearby districts and towns
- Boycott Global and Mobil gas stations

Online

- Sign on-line petition: [/tinyurl.com/coajd27](http://tinyurl.com/coajd27)
- Join the Facebook group - Stop Ethanol Trains through our Communities; www.facebook.com/stopethaNOI
- Join the Google Group: Stop Ethanol Trains in Greater Boston; bit.ly/stop-ethanol-trains-google-group
- Learn more: tinyurl.com/EthanolSafetyStudy

Q&A

Q: Approximately how long are the trains?

A: The trains can be sixty cars (one mile) long and would take eight minutes to pass through any particular location.

Q: How frequently would they run?

A: GLP doesn't have to disclose this information to the city, but the estimate is two to three times per week.

Q: Is it possible an accident or attack would cause a massive explosion?

A: Depending on the amount of air present, the gas could explode or burn as a long-lasting fire. However, it's unlikely that there would be an accident, particularly if GLP implements all of the task force's recommendations.

Q: What's the Federal Government's response?

A: They believe it's safe. Ethanol is transported by train in other areas.

Q: Is there any limitation on going through tunnels with this gas?

A: We'll look into that. (Update: There are no limitations.)

Q: If all the towns went along with GLP's proposal to transport ethanol by train, how quickly would it happen?

A: It would take a long time to get all the necessary precautions in place and extend the rail lines to GLP's facility.

Update

Governor Patrick vetoed the House and Senate amendments in July and proposed a two-year moratorium.

Community Announcements

City Councillors Candidate's Forum

Join us for a Cambridge City Council Candidates Night, a joint meeting with Porter Square Neighbors Association and ANC. This forum, moderated by Alice Wolf, will feature issues important to you and your community.

When: Tuesday, October 8

Where: Auditorium, Lesley University Hall, 1815 Mass. Ave.

Info: psinclair@agassiz.org or (617) 349-6287 x10

Neighbors Request Redesigned Fire Command Center

Richard Barran reported that residents of Hammond Street will revisit their request for an improved fire command center at Harvard University's Northwest Science Building. Previously, neighbors negotiated with Harvard to replace the structure, a brick egress from the underground parking garage, with a structure more appropriate to the overall design. The project had been put on hold due to lack of funding.

Community

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE OF AGASSIZ WITH CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Twice a year, for the past two years, the Cambridge Historical Society has been publishing newsletters that explore the history of one particular neighborhood in Cambridge. Their next issue, due out this winter, will be about the Agassiz neighborhood.

Is there a part of the neighborhood history you really want to share? A couple of movies have been filmed in Agassiz, were you on set? Do you have a photo of the chair carved out of a tree stump that used to be on Oxford Street and want to share it?

Submit an article, share a neighborhood photo, or even just suggest a subject for Agassiz's feature in the Historical Society newsletter by contacting Gavin Kleespies, former Agassiz resident and current director of the Historical Society, at info@cambridgehistory.org.

View some of the earlier issues --Cambridgeport, Mid-Cambridge, Avon Hill, East Cambridge, and Huron Village-- online at: www.cambridgehistory.org/newsletters.



Maud Morgan Arts

MAUD MORGAN ARTS SPIRIT AWARDS BENEFIT

On September 22, join us for the Spirit Awards, a celebration to benefit Maud Morgan Arts. Guests will enjoy sparkling drinks, festive desserts, live music, a silent auction of hand-painted platters, and 3D printers spewing forth

customized, computer-generated jewelry.



Snake/Dark Garden by Clara Wainwright

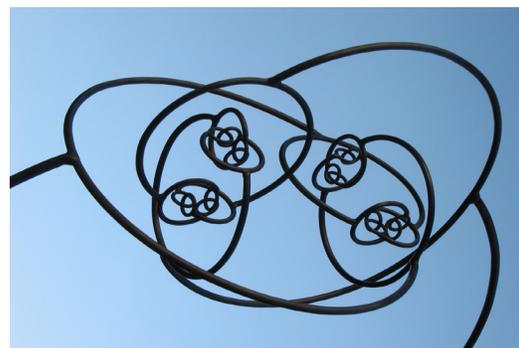
When fabric artist and First Night Boston founder Clara Wainwright received the first Spirit Award in 2003, the arts center existed

only on paper. Now Maud Morgan Arts is a thriving community icon providing classes and workshops for artists of all ages, a place where everyone can experience the transformative power of creativity.

This September, Wainwright will present a Spirit Award to sculptor, jewelry-maker, and Maud Morgan Arts teacher Gideon Weisz, an artist who shares Wainwright's passion for mentoring and who has been deeply influenced by Wainwright's artistic philosophy, but whose own work reflects an entirely different way of seeing the world.

When: Sunday, September 22, 7:00-9:00 PM
Where: 20 Sacramento Street
Tickets: \$25
Info: maudmorganarts.org

Many thanks to Hammond Real Estate for sponsoring the 2013 Spirit Awards Benefit. Additional support comes from the Cambridge Arts Council and Century 21 Avon, Cambridge.



5 Level Alexander's Horned Sphere by Gideon Weisz

Community Calendar

September 2013

Tuesday, September 10	7:30-9:00 PM	ANC Meeting (see page 1 for agenda) Maud Morgan Arts, 20A Sacramento St., 2D Studio All are welcome, please join us!
Wednesday, September 11	6:00-7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting, 20 Sacramento St, 2nd Floor Public welcome
Sunday, September 22	7:00-9:00 PM	Maud Morgan Arts Spirit Awards, 20 Sacramento St., back yard, see page 5 for details

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