Council Meeting Notes

AGENDA ITEMS:

The neighborhood council meeting was devoted to discussion of a proposal prepared by Harvard University for presentation to the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) on March 21st regarding the conversion of the Quality Inn to a Harvard Law School dormitory. The neighborhood council invited users of the Quality Inn Pool at 6:30 to discuss the potential loss of the pool if the Harvard proposal is accepted. Those who used the pool were unhappy with the proposal. They saw the pool as an amenity that once taken away could not be replaced, and they felt that Harvard should find a way to keep it in the neighborhood.

At 7:30 P.M. the general meeting began, and Kathy Speigelman presented the Harvard proposal as it would be presented to the Board of Zoning Appeals. (The proposal was outlined in the March Whistler and In a special letter. Anyone wishing more information should call the office at 349-6287.)

The most difficult and confusing topic was taxes. Normally dormitory space is tax exempt. Due to a complicated lease arrangement, Harvard has been requested by the City of Cambridge to pay taxes on this property. The tax bill has not been generated, and it is unknown how much they will be paying. However, the room tax will be lost, and so will a large amount of tax revenue.

There were neighbors from Mellen St. who were concerned about traffic for the following reasons: 1) If residents park in those spaces as planned in the proposal, there will be no place for visitors and friends to park weekend and evenings. However, if 9-5 workers park, there will be traffic jams at those hours. A compromise was to mix 9-5 workers and residents 2) Traffic is planned to exit onto Mellen St., as it currently exists. (The curb cut now on Mass Ave. is for entering traffic only.) Residents fear that the new use of the parking lot will increase traffic. Residents want the traffic to exit onto Mass. Ave. because Mellen St. will become more congested and dangerous to bikes and pedestrians.

Harvard appeared to be willing to negotiate these problems, but added that the Cambridge traffic department will have final say in these matters.

There was opposition to the loss of affordable hotel space in Cambridge, general opposition to the use of the building as a dormitory, and fears about the disruption this building will have in general. For information on the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting 3/21, see article following.

Neighborhood News

Special Permit for Quality Inn considered by BZA

The Board of Zoning Appeals met on March 21 to consider a proposal from Harvard University to convert the Quality Inn (purchased last year by Harvard) to a law school dormitory. What was unusual about this proposal was that a committee of community members from Agassiz and neighborhood 9, and Harvard representatives had met over a 7 week period to develop a proposal that would be sensitive to neighborhood as well as Harvard needs.

The special permit was supported at the meeting by the above mentioned committee, by the neighborhood nine association. It was opposed by various residents, many of whom had articulated their positions at the neighborhood council meeting described above in "Council Meeting Notes." Most issues were not new except one resident simply opposed the building use as a dormitory.

The BZA felt that it needed more time and more information from Harvard to determine if a special permit should be granted. In spite of the support from neighborhood organizations, the board felt Harvard should do more for the community. They requested clarity on building ownership so that either taxes or in lieu of tax payments could be defined before the permit was issued. They requested a traffic study, and they asked Harvard to clarify their opposition to maintaining the pool for the community. There will be a follow up meeting on May 9th at City Hall to make a determination on the special permit.

Committee Members Respond To Quality Inn Zoning Board Meeting

The neighborhood participation in the Quality Inn negotiating committee grew from a group of people who attended Harvard related meetings since first learning that Harvard had acquired both the Bence Pharmacy site and the Quality Inn. At each meeting, attendance was taken and added to a growing mailing list. That list is currently just under 100 people. Everyone on that list received notice of every Harvard meeting that was sponsored by the Agassiz Neighborhood Council. When Harvard announced its intention to convert the Quality Inn to a dormitory, volunteers for a committee were sought at that evening meeting. In addition to that request, volunteers were sought in the February edition of the Whistler, which is circulated to 1,500. Neighborhood 9 also sent representation.

The Agassiz negotiating committee entered into negotiations with Harvard officials in good faith and in the hope
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(not but necessarily the expectation) that an agreement could be reached that would be acceptable to all parties. The Agassiz committee made it clear that at the outset that, at various stages throughout the process, that may agreement reached with Harvard would be subject to the approval of the broader Agassiz community. It was always the understanding that any agreement reached would be presented to the neighborhood council for discussion and input. The committee was negotiating as representative of the Agassiz neighborhood, not as individuals on their own. Final authority rested with the council.

A hearing date of March 21st was determined by Harvard and the Board of Zoning Appeals. This date did not allow sufficient time between the completion of negotiations and the need to inform residents of the agreement and have them understand it and react to it.

Notices were sent to 300 people and two concurrent meetings were held. A vocal and deeply committed number of residents argued strongly that the site's swimming pool be retained; a number of Mellen St. residents were equally dissatisfied with the traffic and parking plans. It was clear that the plan as negotiated did not have the unanimous approval of the neighborhood. What was less clear, and what was not possible to determine given the severe time constraints, was the extent of approval for the proposal.

The committee still believes this proposal is basically sound. The committee understood that Harvard would present an in lieu of taxes payment agreement at the hearing, and the committee believes that the traffic concerns can be addressed with the traffic department, Harvard U. and Mellen St. residents. While the committee would like to see the pool remain, we understood that it was not negotiable, and the one thing that was not negotiable. Below you will see the various issues addressed in committee and Harvard's response to them:

Issues explored during negotiations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agassiz Neighborhood Council</th>
<th>Harvard Proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Facade improvements to the building</td>
<td>Paint existing metal panel facade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Landscaping on Wendell St.</td>
<td>Agree to provide Landscaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Remove parking spaces on Wendell St. &amp; increase pedestrian safety on Mass. Ave.</td>
<td>Landscape Wendell St. &amp; Close Mass. Avenue entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Operate parking lot to minimize traffic impact on neighborhood</td>
<td>Restrict lot to residential users (who have off peak travel schedules)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Removal of dumpsters on Wendell Street</td>
<td>Agreed to remove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Converted screen for on-street parking lot along Mass. Ave.</td>
<td>Provide 6 high wrought iron fences with brick piers and large caliber street trees and plantings with parking lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Requested continued use of pool</td>
<td>Proposal removes the pool. (Not negotiable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Year-round neighborhood use of space in the building for under serviced children’s programming</td>
<td>Provide 1000 sq. ft. in lower level with kitchen and separate community entrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Taxes - ANC looks for Harvard to pay negotiated tax bill to the city</td>
<td>No commitment to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Minimize disturbance of neighbors by students</td>
<td>Standard Dorm rules in effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Ground level neighborhood retail and continued operation of Doris site tenants</td>
<td>Agreed to long range plan for ground floor retail and commitment to continued neighborhood retail at the Fence Building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is never easy for a small group to represent a much larger group especially when the issues are controversial and the large group is a neighborhood as diverse as the Agassiz. It is within this context that the 5 individuals who volunteered to be on this negotiating committee committed themselves to looking at the purchase and negotiate with Harvard University the best compromise given the realities and difficulties of the situation. It is important to note that Harvard sent to the table representatives that were empowered to make decisions, and the negotiating committee felt that they were fully committed to the process we jointly set up. Except for residents directly effected by the proposed changes, the final draft presented to the BZA represented the committee's best effort to find solutions for the difficult issues we discussed.

The one glaring problem was the lack of a specific tax proposal by Harvard that coincided with what was discussed and agreed to with the full committee, our hope is that with the additional time provided by the BZA, we can further refine the proposal, especially the tax question, clarify more fully the traffic impact and pool problem and continue the open informative discussion we have had with the University over the past 7 weeks.

6 Prentiss St. Receives Variance

The neighborhood council was surprised to find out that a variance had been granted for 6 Prentiss St. to change use for a nursing home to an 18 room bed and breakfast. The neighborhood council had received no notice, and it had not been seen in the Cambridg Chronicle. Upon further investigation it was found that the notices had been placed in the Cambridge Tab.

The neighborhood council wrote to the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) requesting to appeal the case, but the Board of Zoning Appeals intends to reopen the case, and it will be heard by the BZA again on April 25th.

Since then we have been contacted by Charlotte Forsythe, the applicant, who agreed to meet with the neighborhood on April 6th at 8 P.M. to present the plans for the bed and breakfast. Anyone who would like to receive information on the BZA meeting should call the council at 349-6287.

Traffic Study of Oxford St. Received

We received a letter from George Teso, Traffic Director to City Manager Robert Healy dated March 12 and sent to us courtesy of Mayor Wolf's office. The letter says "enclosed is a copy of the Oxford St. Traffic Study conducted by the Traffic and Parking Department. This is a compilation of several studies which were conducted at specific locations. Additional data has been included in order develop a report covering the full length of Oxford St. from the Somerville City line to Kirkland St." The study, which is over 30 pages with appendix, is available for review in the council office.

The purpose stated in the study was "to examine the full length of Oxford St. to determine what sort of problems may exist and determine if there are plausible solutions to alleviate problems we find. A variety of historical data combined with updated material concerning speeds, accidents and volumes are to be used."

The above mentioned data were presented and discussed in the report. The conclusions are as follows:
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There have been numerous improvements in the recent past which have had a positive effect on the safety along Oxford St. This is supported by the lack of reportable accidents at the intersections of Wendell St. and Everett St. in 1990 compared to previous years.

The signals located at Sacramento St. and at Forest St. both have exclusive pedestrian phases. These signals provide safety for people crossing Oxford St. as well as placing a control on the speed along Oxford St.

There is a high demand for parking along this roadway which is why limited time parking was installed between Everett St. and Kirkland St. There have been comments suggesting that the parking be removed along one entire side of the street to increase land widths. This measure would penalize the residents living in the area and possibly increase the speed of traffic on Oxford St.

If the Truck Exclusion is accepted by the State for Kirkland St., the cut through truck traffic along Oxford St. should decline. This should improve the safety along Oxford St. Further studies should be done to monitor the performance of the changes which have been made in the recent past.

Another factor which should impact Oxford St. is the installation of the computerized traffic signal system which is being installed in the city. Massachusetts Avenue between Harvard Square and Porter Square was put on the system in 1990. This ties the intersection together and makes timing the signals quicker and more efficient. With improved flow on Massachusetts Avenue a larger percentage of drivers should stay on this road forgoing alternate routes such as Oxford Street.

The neighborhood council traffic committee will meet to discuss it soon. Please call the council at 349-6287 to be part of that discussion.

Lincoln’s Inn Receives License

Residents around 44ollen Street have been disturbed by the social activities of the Lincoln’s Inn, which is an independent organization whose members are Harvard Law School students.

The Cambridge License Commission renewed the lodging house license at a 3/19 meeting providing that the law school assumes some responsibility for the behavior of participants. In a letter sent to the License Commission, Deans Sarah Wald and David Smith advised the committee that they had met with Inn officers to discuss ways to ensure that neighborhood problems of which we had been made aware in the past were resolved in a systematic way. These discussions led to the adoption of the Inn’s “Management Plan,” which for the first time spelled out in some detail what practices the Inn would adopt to minimize neighborhood disruption. These practices were written into the bylaws to ensure continuity. Since the adoption of that plan, there have been do complains about the Inn’s behavior.

However, we agree with the neighbors that monitoring on a long term basis is appropriate. Accordingly, we would propose that any future complaints about disruptive behavior by Inn students be directed to the License Commission, with immediate notification to the Law School. If there are substantiated complaints of serious disruptive behavior anytime within the next three years, Harvard will join the neighbors in appealing before the Commission, and will urge that the Commission take whatever action it deems advisable to resolve the situation, including, if appropriate, revocation of the Inn’s license.

At that time, Harvard also will seriously consider decertifying the Inn as a student organization. However, we remain concerned that decertification may not improve the situation, because it will result in a loss of leverage with the students. It may be that cutting all ties with the student organization will not serve the neighbors and our mutual interest, since we than would be unable to help monitor or influence student behavior, or to offer our facilities for on-campus (as opposed to Follen Street) parties. Harvard Law School does agree to consult with the neighbors about the decertification issue if it arises.

At the end of the three year period Harvard Law School will also assess the need to continue this commitment.

This letter was supplied to us by Harvard Law School. For a copy of the complete letter sent to the License Commission, contact the council at 349-6287.

City Wide News and Information

A Cambridge Housing Plan

City Councillor Ed Cyr had authored a proposal called “Housing Our People - THE CAMBRIDGE HOUSING PLAN” This is a twelve page document that discusses the problems, clarifies policies, suggests administrative reorganization (to place city staff from 5 different departments into one -The Cambridge Housing Department), and strategies for financing.

It has been referred by the full Council to the Community Development and Housing Subcommittee, which is chaired by Councillor Cyr. The neighborhood council can provide you with a copy by calling 349-6287. If you would like more information on meetings, please contact Councillor Cyr at 349-4280.

Environment and Economic Development Join

City Councillors Frank Duehay and Jonathan Myers have recently announced that their Council Subcommittees on Environment and Economic Development will this spring develop revised growth management policies to recommend to the entire City Council.

In a joint statement, Councillors Duehay and Myers said: “It is essential that Cambridge zoning and planning reflect both the City’s future economic and financial needs and the necessity to protect and enhance the character of its residential neighborhoods. In order to encourage appropriate development and job creation, Cambridge must respect its residential environment. During the current period of slow growth and in preparation for the next economic upturn, the City Council must state its policies clearly and ensure that they are implemented. Unless we eliminate the feud between neighborhood and development interests, our City will fail to grow sensibly.”

Pursuant to their council order passed last November, Councillors Duehay and Myers went on to say that the City Council has requested the Planning Board, with the assistance of the community Development Department, prepare recommendations for Committee review. These recommendations will take into account reports already made by Citizens for Liveable Neighborhoods, the Cambridge Democratic City Committee, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and the Joint Legislative Commission on Growth and Change. The council order, co-sponsored by Councillor Cyr, also asked the Community Development Department to accelerate its neighborhood planning studies which enhance residential stability.

On May 14 at 7 P.M. the Committees will hear preliminary recommendations of the Planning Board and take public testimony. On June 4 at 7 P.M. the Committees will meet to make their final recommendations to the full City Council. For more information please call Cambridge City Council at 349-4280.
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*** Council Programs ***

Community School Programs

*Sacramento St. Preschool* - The preschool is accepting applications for this fall. It follows the Cambridge School calendar. All children enroll for 5 days per week, and the hours are 9 A.M. to noon. The ages served are from 2.9 to 4 years, and the cost is $215 per month. Scholarships are available.

*Agassiz Afterschool Childcare* - This program is now enrolling for the fall. It accepts children in grades K-4 who will need childcare every afternoon after school on half days, and all day during school vacations. Younger children are located in the community center at 20 Sacramento St., older children are located in the Agassiz school. Spaces are limited, so call as soon as possible to enroll. Cost is $215, and scholarships are available.

*Agassiz Afterschool Activities* - The afterschool activities program provides children with childcare for 1-3 days per week, including all half days during the school year. Vacation week care is optional. This program will hold registration on the first two weeks of school (September 5th and 6th), from 2:45 to 5 P.M. at 20 Sacramento St. Activities include drama, art, sports, a special day for young children, cooking and much more. Costs vary depending on amount of days and terms. To be on the mailing list for September Information, which will be mailed in August, call 349-6287.

*Agassiz 5-6th Grade Afterschool Activities* - This program provides afterschool activities suitable for older school age children. There is only one activity each day, and favorites include the Agassiz Afterschool Players, Video Production, Illustration, Cooking, and Chorus. Activities do change each term. There is no vacation childcare. Registration is the same as afterschool activities (see above). Please call 349-6287 to be on the mailing list for September information.

*The Agassiz Afterschool Players*, directed by Carol E. Hantman, is a theater program that will be available for two age groups every term this year. Children help write, then perform an original theatre piece each term.

*The Agassiz Neighborhood Youth Chorus*, directed by Ada Snider, meets at Lesley College. It was formed to provide an opportunity for children ages 8.5 and older to experience the joy of singing together, as well as to learn and perform music in a variety of styles.

*Outback Summer Camp* - This summer camp runs for 6 weeks beginning the first week in July. The hours are 8:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. with an extended day option until 5:30 P.M. Children must register for a minimum of two weeks but they need not be consecutive weeks. Extended hours must be registered for by the week. The cost for camp is $95 per week and $125 for the week plus extended day. Call 349-6287 for information or brochures on any of the above programs.

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Student show in the gallery at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center from March 28 through April 27th. The gallery is located at 41 Second St. in East Cambridge, and the gallery hours are between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. Monday through Friday, or by appointment. Call 577-1400 for more information.

*** Ads and Announcements ***

Yoga Introduction Offered

On April 11th from 7:30 to 8:30 P.M. at the Agassiz Community Center you can find out everything you always wanted to know about Yoga but were afraid to ask. Meet with Kripalu Yoga teacher Danielle Levi Alvaes for an hour of questions and answers, demonstrations and a short and gentle experiential exercise. If you have fears, resistance, doubts about Yoga, yet are curious, this is the meeting for you. Open to all variety of ages, sexes and physical abilities.

Kripalu Yoga Classes begin on Tuesday April 2nd at 25 Carver St. and run for 12 weeks unless otherwise noted. For all ages and conditions. Call 354-2113 for fees and information.

-April 2nd Tuesday 12:30-1:45 P.M. and 6-7:15 P.M.
-April 3rd Wednesday 6-7:15 P.M.
-April 4th Thursday 8:30-9:45 A.M. and 5:30-6:45 P.M.
 (The evening class is 10 wks. and held at 11 Garden St.)
-April 8th Monday 6-7:15 P.M. (this is a ten week class)

Summer Youth Employment

The Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program offers job opportunities and support services to Cambridge youth 14-15 years of age. They are seeking individuals to be COUNSELOR/SUPERVISOR (8 hr. 7/1-8/16), who will be responsible for the day to day supervision of youth who will be working at various sites in the city. They will serve as liaison between program administrators and worksite staff, teach positive work behaviors, distribute paychecks and time sheets, as well as make any necessary service referrals. The deadline is 5/17. All jobs are 37.5 hrs. per week. Resumes should go to Mayors Summer Youth Program, ATTN: Deborah Lemeer Goodman, City Hall, Cambridge, MA 02139.

CAN WE TALK??

Mother and child (5 year Agassiz School student) are searching for a 2 bedroom apartment in the Agassiz Neighborhood. Prefer rent control but will consider options under $800. Looking to move by June 1st but will consider earlier date. Any leads: please call 876-44672.

-*** Seniors News ***-

5th Annual Road Race Benefits Senior Programs

The City of Cambridge Department of Human Services Programs presents the 5th Annual 5 Mile Road Race, "Stride for Seniors," on April 7th beginning at 8:45 until 10 A.M. with proceeds to benefit Council on Aging Programs. Harvard University is a major sponsor.

The race begins at 695 Huron Ave-The Fresh Pond Clubhouse. Entry fee is $10, and there are divisions for 18 and under-Juniors/19-29 Open/30-39 Open/40-49 Masters/50+

Seniors race loops around Fresh Pond. For more information call 349-6230.

-*** Cultural Happenings ***-

KATRyna HADLEY Recent Quilts and Fabric Collage

The Agassiz Neighborhood Council is proud to present the work of Agassiz resident Katryna Hadley in the Sacramento St. Gallery located in the Community Center at 20 Sacramento St.

The opening reception will be held on Friday April 12th between 6-8 P.M. The show will run through April 21st, and gallery hours are Thursday, 8 P.M. and Saturday and Sunday, 12-5 P.M. or by appointment. Call 349-6287.

CRLS 15th Annual Photography Show

The Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School presents a
A representative of the Wasserman Development Corporation of Cambridge, in answer to questions from *The Whistler*, has said that no plans other than refurbishment have been made for the block of stores running from 1720 through 1730 Massachusetts Avenue. Rumors that a high-rise building would be constructed on that site have recently circulated the nearby neighborhoods, which led to the inquiry. The group of stores includes a number of long-time neighborhood favorites. The stores from 1720 through 1730 Mass. Ave. are: Margaret's Dress Shop, Cambridge Typewriter Co., Fabrications, the Cambridge Tower of Pizza, Inc., and the Economy 5 & 10 (Irwin's).

Mr. Bruce Beal, speaking for the Wasserman Corporation, stated that no architectural studies are being made of that area and that there are no commitments of any kind. Currently leases of three years and more are being given out, he said. Reports that rents for these stores had been greatly increased and that there was a change in leasing arrangements were heard in the community.

Wasserman Corporation bought the buildings in a large real estate transaction in October (see adjoining article). They own, as well, the adjoining property at 1718 Mass. Ave. on which a temporary dental office for Dr. H. A. Levine has been constructed.

Mr. Richard Grossman, owner of Fabrications, which has a store in Brookline as well as the one at 1724 Mass. Ave., owns the other group of stores on this Mass. Ave. block. They were purchased before Wasserman acquired their property. This group includes: Abbott's Clearing House (antiques), the Harvard Laundromat, the A&P, and the Linnaean Pharmacy.

Two blocks north on Mass. Ave. is another parcel of property owned by the Wasserman Corporation. The house numbered 1780 Mass. Ave. was demolished by them recently. No firm plans have been made as yet for that block, Mr. Beal said.

Wasserman is the developer of the Fresh Pond Shopping Center and the new Rindge Ave. tower apartments.

(Reprinted with permission from the Cambridge Chronicle of October 29, 1970)

WASSERMAN BUYS FORTY PROPERTIES FROM ESTATE OF LATE BERTHA COHEN

In what may be one of Greater Boston's largest real estate transactions this year, Wasserman Development Corporation of Cambridge this week acquired 40 commercial and residential parcels from the Estate of Bertha E. Cohen.

All properties are located in the Greater Boston area, with most being in Cambridge and the balance in Boston's Back Bay and Roxbury. Others are in Somer-
Community Calendar for April

April 7 Sunday 10:30 A.M.  5 MILE Road Race to benefit Seniors Programs
DHSP meet at 695 Huron Ave. Call 349-6230
April 9 Tuesday 12:45 P.M.  Agassiz School Early Release
April 9 Tuesday 7:30 P.M.  Agassiz Neighborhood Council Meeting
20 Sacramento St. 2nd floor (see agenda pg.1)
April 11 Thursday 7:30 P.M.  Yoga Introductory Class  Daniella Levi Alvares
20 Sacramento St. 2nd floor
April 12 Friday 6-8 P.M.  Katryn Hadley Recent Quilts and Fabric Collage
Sacramento St. Gallery 20 Sacramento St.
April 15-19 Monday-Friday  April School Vacation Cambridge Public Schools
April 25 Thursday TBA  Board of Zoning Appeals Hearing on 6 Prentiss St.
May 18 Saturday TBA  conversion to 18 room Bed and Breakfast
Agassiz School Auction  HOLD THE DATE!

Please note: The party originally scheduled for April 9th has been postponed till late spring

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