Notes from the November 28 ANC Meeting

Kathleen Manion brought the meeting to order, and Terry DeLancey provided announcements and follow up from last month:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANC presents *The Firebird*, a shadow puppet performance on **December 12 at 3:00 p.m.** in the Agassiz School for 81. See Cultural Happenings page 6.

**The Kids Only Holiday Sale** will begin on **December 6 through December 9**, weekdays after school until 5:30 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. This sale provides inexpensive gifts for kids to buy for family and friends in a safe environment at the Gallery, 20 Sacramento St.

**Cambridge Parking Permits** are still on sale in the Community Lobby of the Agassiz School, Sacramento St. door on Wednesdays through December from 4:00-7:30 p.m.

ANC received notice that the **Cambridge Main Branch Library** is scheduled for renovations. See City Wide page 4.

FOLLOW UP FROM LAST MONTH

Last month ANC sent a letter to National Car Rental requesting that they do some pruning and plant removal to provide for better pedestrian access. They have contacted us to advise that work was done right after the letter was received. They agreed to do some landscaping in that area in the spring.

**The Cottonwood Cafe** did receive an entertainment license for one vocalist and one instrument, no amplification. In the letter to the Cottonwood, which was forwarded to the ANC, the License commission advised them that any other changes to the license would require a public hearing.

Kathleen introduced the speakers: David Valenstein from the Traffic Committee. Paul Myers from Porter Square Neighbors Association. David Civilinski representing the Porter Square Shopping Center and Charlie Christopher from Christopher’s Restaurant in Porter Square who is working toward the purchase of Rosie’s Bar and Grille on Mass. Ave.

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**Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council**

**AGENDA ISSUES**

**Traffic Committee**

The Traffic Committee met just prior to the council meeting, and **Chair David Valenstein** came to the council requesting that the ANC write a letter requesting the traffic department honor an agreement dated 8/93 (made by George Taso, then Commissioner). Among other things this agreement provided for traffic signals at Oxford/Sacramento and Oxford/Forest to be changed from semi-actuated to pre-timed mode, then monitored to determine effectiveness on congestion and accident frequency.

**Paul Myers from the Porter Square Neighbors Association** spoke about their upcoming meeting scheduled for December 2, Saturday, **Envision Porter Square**. Beginning at 9:00 a.m. the meeting, at the Masonic Temple on Mass. Ave., will focus on how the Porter Square Shopping Center can be improved. It will include presentations by representatives of the center as well as community development representatives from Somerville and Cambridge. This will be the planning kick off meeting for renovations to Porter Square Shopping Center scheduled for the spring. Agassiz neighbors were invited to participate.

**John Civilinski, Director of Real Estate Planning and Investment for Gravestar, Inc.** representing the owners of the Porter Square Shopping Center, mirrored many of Paul Myers comments. The **Envision Porter Square meeting December 2** will begin the community process to identify what neighbors would like to see happen prior to any plan being drawn up.

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**Next ANC Council Meeting**

**December 12, Tuesday**

**Agassiz School Community Level**

**28 Sacramento St. door**

**7:30 p.m.**

**Agenda:**

**Frank Duchay** will be on hand for an Agassiz response to the City’s recommendations regarding Harvard housing units after rent control. (See details on page 2.)
Charlie Christopher spoke to the council about his purchase of Rosie’s Bar and Grille on Mass. Ave. (between Sacramento and Wendell Sts.) Charlie was with his wife and partner, Holly Nespoli, and they provided additional information about their plans. He described the food he will serve as “comfort food” including sandwiches and burgers. The menu will not be as extensive as Christopher’s, but the quality will be the same. They would like to provide a good value, with few items exceeding $10.

They would like to transfer the current licenses as they are now. While it is a full liquor license, Charlie foresaw a bar that specialized in beer, serving a wide variety of different beers. He emphasized that he wanted the bar to serve the neighborhood, with single women feeling comfortable at it. He also emphasized his vigilance in checking I.D. to prevent under age drinking.

Entertainment would include music much like the music of his other place, Christopher’s at Porter Square. Charlie described the groups as playing their own original, high quality music. He said that six groups that performed at Christopher’s have signed national contracts. He expressed a willingness to work with the neighborhood if there are any problems, and explained how in Porter Square a baffle was built to keep the noise down for the neighbors of Christopher’s. He explained that smoking was permitted at Christopher’s but the sections were small. Later in the evening the smoking was more extensive, but various filtering was done to improve the air.

Joel Bard expressed approval for the plan, given the fact that several years ago there had been plans for a multistory building on that site, and the prior difficulties with the site before it was taken over by Bill Ravanis. The neighborhood did acknowledge the good relationship we have enjoyed with Bill Ravanis of Rosie’s Bar and Grille, and what a good neighbor he has been. His donation of space to the Agassiz Afterschool during construction of the new school was what working with the community is all about. Charlie hopes he will be a neighbor in that tradition.

There was no objection stated to the proposal which does not yet have a licensing hearing date scheduled. The capacity is currently 280 seats and the closing times are currently 1 a.m. Sunday-Thursday, 2 a.m. Friday through Sunday.

Mass. Ave. Study

The discussion was diffuse and included issues of livability, aesthetics, traffic, pedestrian and bike patterns, sidewalk use and size, Mass. Ave. lane size and use, building use, and more. Satisfaction with the liveliness of Mass. Ave. for pedestrians and concern that it remain that way was a theme in the discussion.

Joel Bard, who was effective in the down zoning of Mass. Ave. in the early 80’s, suggested that the group needed some professional help to proceed, specifically Cambridge Community Development staff. He also suggested that the group look at the Avenue block by block. Jack Josephs, from Neighborhood Nine Association, suggested that the group wait until the issues effecting Porter Square were further along before proceeding.

Neighborhood News
Respond to the City’s Recommendations for Harvard’s Housing Property after Rent Control

ANC Monthly Meeting
December 12, Tuesday
7:30 p.m.
Agassiz School, Sacramento St. Door
(see below for more information)

Harvard and Housing Units after Rent Control
The City Council Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development, Chaired by City Councillor Frank Durey, met on October 5th, again on October 12 in a public hearing with representatives from Harvard to discuss Harvard’s plans for housing property after rent control. Below is Councillor Frank Durey’s report dated October 25 on this issue:

The Committee on Housing and Community Development met on October 5, 1995 for the purpose of hearing reports form the City Manager and Harvard University on the status of discussions between the City and Harvard University concerning the disposition of Harvard’s stock of rent-controlled housing.

Harvard owns currently 5% of the formerly rent-controlled units located primarily in three of the city’s neighborhoods: Agassiz, Riverside and Mid-Cambridge.

In its proposal Harvard has agreed to protect until 1998 those 94 lower income tenants now protected under law only until January 1, 1997. Harvard has agreed to set aside (for only twenty years) 10% of its units for low and moderate income tenants and to sell 24 houses on the open
market giving existing tenants the right of first refusal at fair market value. However, most of the remaining units would be converted from open housing to housing available only to university affiliates. Harvard has also agreed to allow existing rents to rise gradually to market rate and not to evict tenants in good standing. Harvard has committed itself to pay full property taxes on its affiliate housing.

Harvard purchased much of this housing at low prices due to the depressed value caused by rent control. Now, Harvard, perhaps the wealthiest university in the world, stands to benefit financially from the loss of rent control in two ways: first by buying at low prices and second by receiving a windfall at the end of rent control. Harvard is an international institution, protected from paying property taxes, providing far more public benefit outside Cambridge than within. It should not be speculated in the real estate market to the detriment of a diverse Cambridge.

From the perspective of the three neighborhoods primarily affected, the conversion to affiliate use will cause significant demographic change. The policy proposed by Harvard will change the economic mix. Those of lower income will be replaced gradually by those of higher income. Permanent tenants will give way to transient tenants. Therefore, the policy will add to neighborhood instability in a city whose communities are already dominated by university interests. The university has made it clear through its financial structure and financial aid program that housing for "affiliates: means housing for faculty and graduate students, not for clerical and technical workers. This latter category of employee is much more likely to add permanence and economic diversity to the neighborhood.

The quality of life in these neighborhoods will be adversely affected because long time residents will wind up living in close proximity to students whose life style may not be compatible. This could cause further de-stabilization in these neighborhoods as long term residents are driven out by noise and disruption. This could allow Harvard to buy up even more housing at low prices and turn these neighborhoods into part of the institution.

Under the proposals Harvard has put forth, the 94 designated units would be preserved as affordable for only 20 years and all other units would eventually become market rate. It is in the best interest of the City of Cambridge to do everything in its power to ensure that Harvard's rent-controlled housing stock not become affiliate housing.

With the loss of rent control and with cuts in many federal domestic programs affecting low and moderate income persons, fewer and fewer such persons will be able to afford to live in Cambridge. Harvard, since it has benefited financially so substantially from the demise of rent control, should stand as a beacon and as an example to other institutions and property owners in Cambridge to moderate that trend.

Councillor Born has not had an opportunity to consider this report and Vice-Mayor Russell did not attend the hearing due to a conflict. Therefore, this report and the recommendations that follow are the recommendations of the Chair only, and not of the full committee. I present them for the full Councils consideration.

1. That Harvard and the City of Cambridge jointly fund a program which would allow all of Harvard's formerly rent-controlled housing units to be purchased at below market costs by tenants under the City's first time low interest home ownership plan or continue as rental units owned by the City's non-profit community development corporations.

2. That the City Council, with the leadership of the Mayor and the City Manager, assume that responsibility to negotiate directly with the officers of Harvard, under the leadership of its President.

These two points were adopted in Council by an affirmative vote of nine members on October 30.

For a complete version of the report, which includes testimony from the October 12 hearing and a letter from Harvard Real Estate and Planning, call the ANC at 349-6287 and will provide you with copies.
The Whistler December 1995

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Mutual Funds
Annuities
Life, Health and Disability Insurance*

| Crime Watch |
| This information about the Agassiz Neighborhood is excerpted from the Police Commissioner’s Report to Neighborhoods |

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Agassiz Neighborhood Report
With the exception of auto theft all target crimes in the Agassiz neighborhood have increased through the first nine months of 1994. Housebreaks continue to rise, and are beginning to level off... The increase was fueled by a series of breaks identified during the second quarter of 1995 where suspect(s) targeted houses on Sacramento, Oxford, and Everett Streets early in the week between the hours of 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. During the second quarter of 1995 a series of street robberies sent the percent increase soaring. The pattern was eradicated with the arrest of 5 Somerville teenagers. From July to September there was one street robbery. Auto thefts have dropped this year dramatically.

The New Agassiz School is open and full of valuable things. Although there is a sophisticated alarm system, please report any suspicious activity to the police immediately.

City Wide

Porter Square Gets Attention
Porter Square is poised for some changes, and the new Porter Square Neighbors Association is ready to plan for them. As discussed above on page one, the Porter Square Shopping Center will be renovated with planning input from neighbors. In an effort to include as many people as possible,

the FSNA has distributed 2,000 questionnaires to residents in the Porter Square area to get some (unscientific) data from those unable to attend their December 2 meeting. If you would like to receive a questionnaire you can call the ANC at 349-6387. Remember, all interested people are welcome to attend meetings of the Porter Square group. Call Paul Myers at 457-2531.

Another project that is on the horizon will utilize federal funding of $1,000,000 for improvements to Mass. Ave. from where it meets Somerville Ave. north. This should greatly enhance Porter Square.

Main Library to be Renovated
Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Association has scheduled a meeting on December 5 at 7:00 p.m. in the library on Broadway to discuss renovations to the library. The Main Branch of the Cambridge Public Library is slated to be renovated with substantial expansion, and the City has selected a team of architects.

At that meeting Susan Flannery, Director of the Cambridge Public Library, will present background information and time lines. Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association is considering the formation of a committee to work with the City.

SNOW WILL FALL-BE READY
The first snow storm on November 29 was a good reminder for all Agassiz residents to be prepared for the winter. Get your snow shovel ready, your ice melter stocked up, and remember the elderly, those with baby carriages and disabilities who rely on clean sidewalks to get around in the winter.

If your community spirit doesn’t prevail and you don’t shovel, it is against the law. You can get a $25 fine per day if you don’t.

For those responsible snow shovellers, the ANC has a supply of friendly reminder cards you can leave on your neighbor’s door if they fail to remove their snow. The reminder also provides phone numbers to call to get help with shoveling. Call ANC and we will send you out some cards.

If that fails, and you can’t get your neighbor to move the snow, call the Hot Line at 349-4903. You must give them the complete address of the person who has not shoveled, and they will respond.

If you are a single family home owner of low income and are elderly or disabled, you may meet eligibility requirements that provides for the Department of Public Works to shovel your sidewalk. To apply for the Snow Exemption Program, contact Susan Pacheco at 349-6220.

CAMBRIDGE CONDO BUYERS INITIATIVE
Celebrate the City’s first time home buyer program which will be officially launched on December 5 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. in the Ackerman Room of City Hall.

This program will make condo ownership affordable if you qualify. Families with children and residents of formerly rent-controlled apartments will have priority.
Eligible incomes by family size are: 1-person household (hh) $28,150, 2 person hh $32,150, 3 person hh $36,200, 4 person hh $40,200. You will be checked for credit, savings, and job history. The condo must be priced at or below $135,000, 51% owner occupied, solvent with adequate reserves, and be in Cambridge. The City will help you obtain a special mortgage, give help on rehab, and provide financial assistance.

Call Penelope Pelton at 349-4642.

**Agassiz Public School**

The noisy fan on top of the Agassiz School is scheduled to be fixed by December 1. As you read this, the fan should be quiet. Please call the ANC at 349-6287 if it is not, or if you have any comments on the fan.

**Agassiz Community School**

*About the Agassiz Community School*
by Jody Garber, Program Director

The Agassiz Community School is well into its 1995-96 school year providing after school programming for children in kindergarten through grade five. The program for children in grades one through five is in the Agassiz School at 29 Sacramento St., while the kindergarten is located at 20 Sacramento St.

After our two year hiatus, it is a huge delight to have Afters return to the Agassiz School. Our increased space - - new, gleaming, and ready for action - - has provided the Afterschool with wonderful programming opportunities. Children in grades one through five are able to choose from a wide variety of activities ranging from chess to sewing to creative writing to dance. We also offer Tai Kwon Do, science, baking, drama, art projects and crafts. Of particular interest this year have been a program with Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology on buffaloes and a (somewhat) weekly newsletter, *The Extra*, written by the Agassiz Afterschool Reporters.

The kindergarten program has the Community Center space all to itself this year as enrollment continues to increase. In addition to their "regular" activities of clay, drawing, story telling, crafts and so one, this year the younger children have specialists in music and creative movement to enhance their program. Of course, a highlight of the program continues to be the backyard play area, a feature of enduring and immense appeal.

We are extremely fortunate this year as well in having an outstanding staff on board to ensure the safety, smooth functioning and creativity of the programs. Dawn Greene and Michael Brown are our two Site Coordinators, and they are both supported by talented and committed staff members each of whom brings something special to the program.

In addition to the after school programs mentioned above, the Agassiz Community School also offers a part-day preschool program, The Sacramento Street Preschool located at 20 Sacramento Street as well as an after school activity based program for students in the sixth through eighth grades. Activities for this age group include theater games, creative writing, illustrative drawing, mall crawl, and the ever popular cooking.

If you would like more information regarding any of the children's programs, please call 349-6287. We'd be happy to help.

**Agassiz Afterschool**

**KIDS ONLY HOLIDAY SALE**

The Kids Sale will open December 6-9, weekdays after school until 5:30, Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. in the Gallery at 20 Sacramento St. Children can purchase gifts for family and friends in a safe and friendly atmosphere where most gifts cost about $1-82. Staff from the Agassiz Afterschool will be on hand to help kids with math and selection. All proceeds to benefit the Agassiz Afterschool programs. Thanks to Jolie de Vivre for their wonderful merchandise donations.

**Cambridge Trust Art Contest Winner**

Gregory Lee, who attends the Agassiz Afterschool, will receive a $50 Savings Bond. His picture and the winning art he created will represent September in Cambridge Trust's new calendar for 1996!
The Afterschool Needs:

- Kitchen items in good condition: Pots, Pans and Utensils, an electric mixer or Mixmaster

- An old microscope

Call Jody if you can contribute. All contributions are tax deductible

Evening Programs

Teen Basketball
Basketball for teens is off to a good start. It is available in the Agassiz School gym, 28 Sacramento St. on Monday evenings from 6:00-7:30 p.m. The cost is now $1.

Adult Gym Programs
Adults have an opportunity to use the gym on Wednesday nights from 6-8 p.m. The first hour is basketball, the second hour, originally slated for open gym time, is currently used for basketball by popular demand. Other activities can be scheduled. Drop in or call 349-6287. The cost is $2.

Lesley College

Lesley College wants to be a good neighbor, so if you have any problems related to Lesley College, here are the people you can call for help:

Important Lesley Phone Numbers:

ALL EMERGENCY OR AFTER HOURS CALL 349-8888
Security Issues - Jim Holmes 349-8888
Building & Grounds Issues - David Erlandson 349-8886
Dormitory Issues - Nancy Calvin 349-8585
Flannung Issues - Alan Fein 349-8700
Resource Sharing - Linda Brion Meisels -349-8940
All Other Issues - Sam Turner - 349-8500

Cultural Happenings

The Firebird Comes to Agassiz
Admission is only $1 Tuesday, December 12 at 3 p.m. when The Firebird will be presented on the new Agassiz School stage, 28 Sacramento St. at 3:00 p.m. This narrated performance features brilliantly colored shadow puppets with a luminous quality best described as stained glass. The show is set to the music of Stravinsky’s Firebird Suite, and tells the classic Russian tale of good versus evil. The companion piece Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks, set to music by Strauss, tells the German tale of a legendary trickster who breaks bad habits using humor. The Firebird and Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks are both productions of The Underground Railway Theater.

The unbelievable admission price of $1 is made possible by a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Agassiz Neighborhood Council. It is a wonderful event for children of all ages and something to do on a Cambridge Public School early release day.

This show is part of the Children’s Performance Series “Introducing Art.” This series will provide events every month throughout the school year, and the next one will be flamenco dancing by Ramon de los Reyes Spanish Dance Theater on Sunday, January 28.

Call The Agassiz Neighborhood Council at 349-6287 for more information on this event or the series.

ART CLASSES
Carolyn Boriss-Krimsky, artist, registered art therapist and licensed mental health counselor is providing art classes and art therapy sessions for children in her neighborhood studio during after school hours. For more information call 547-8444.

ARTISTS SOUGHT
The Sacramento Street Gallery, reopened after Agassiz School construction, is looking for neighborhood (and Cambridge) artists to show their work. Come by 20 Sacramento St. and look at the space, then stop in upstairs and talk to Jody. Or call 349-6287.

Public Forum 12/11
The Massachusetts Cultural Council will present a Public Forum on December 11, Monday from 3:00-5:30 p.m. in the Emerson Majestic Theater, 219 Tremont St. to discuss the Council’s three year plan, including several new funding opportunities and discussion on the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Call 727-3668 for more information.

Better Late than Never we say thanks to the Embraceables for their music at the Agassiz School Celebration
Thank you to
Bruce Petschek
for providing the Agassiz
Construction Video at the
Thanksgiving Pot Luck so
that everyone who missed
it at the Agassiz Opening
Celebration could have
the chance to see it.

ANC Board members
Sue Bergin and Fred Levy mug for the camera.

Thank You Turkey Cookers
Joel Bard
Faith Chase
Mary Jo Clark
Jon Cummings
Rich Curran
and Sharon Hamer
Poli Davilla
Christa Everetze
Jane Flanders
Linda Hudson
Kathy Knisely
Marie Lisenby
Margaret Moore
Ada Snider
Sally Waters

Karen Vaters carves one of 14 turkeys
cooked for the November 21 Pot Luck.

Announcements

Volunteers Needed to Shovel the Agassiz Tot Lot
Anyone interested in keeping the Tot Lot (at the corner of
Oxford and Sacramento Streets) clear of snow may volunteer
to be on a list to be called at times when snow accumulates
and prevents safe play by our children. Come to play, bring
shovels, hot chocolate and snacks.

Health and human service consulting group looking
for office space in Agassiz neighborhood. 250-300 sq. ft.
Please call Dorothy Webman 864-6769.

Parents Forum provided us with this announcement: a Brief
Introduction to American Sign Language. December 5 and
12th 6:30-8:30 p.m. Adults and school age youth, same fee:
$15. Telephone registration to Dr. Richard Phelps, 349-6735,
CRLS, 459 Broadway, Cambridge.
THE WHISTLER ~ Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council
COMMUNITY CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER 1995

December 2, Saturday  9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m  Envision Porter Square

December 6-9
  Wednesday-Friday  3:00-5:30 p.m.
  Saturday  10:00 a.m. - 3 p.m.  Kids Only Sale, 20 Sacramento St.
  in the Gallery

December 12, Tuesday  3:00 p.m.  The Firebird shadow puppet performance
  Agassiz School Stage, 28 Sacramento St.
  Admission $1.00. (See page 6)

December 12, Tuesday  6:30 p.m.
  7:30 p.m.  ANC Board-(Open to the public)
  ANC Monthly Meeting, Agassiz School
  28 Sacramento St. Entrance

December 17, Sunday Hanukkah begins at Sundown

December 25-January 1 Cambridge Public School Vacation

The Whistler is published monthly September - June by the Agassiz Neighborhood Council, distribution 2,000. Neighborhood residents may be added to the mailing list by calling 349-6287. Items of interest to the Agassiz neighborhood may be submitted for consideration to address below, no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication date.

DECEMBER 1995
Agassiz Neighborhood Council
20 Sacramento St.
Cambridge, MA 02138
617 349-6287  FAX 497-4388
EMail 74372.1770@Compuserve.Com

DO NOT FORWARD

Get your Christmas tree at the sale to benefit Agassiz Community
Children's Preschool, 1803 Mass. Ave.
(North Prospect Church) at the corner of Roseland St. They will be selling Christmas Trees and wreaths on Thursdays and Fridays from 4:00-8:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from Noon to 8:00 p.m. ending the 23rd of December.

The Whistler is printed on 100% recycled and recyclable paper.