Council Meeting Notes

The January 23. Joint Agassiz School-Agassiz Neighborhood Council meeting was attended by more than 50 people in spite of a driving rain. The meeting began with a video that portrayed the need for a new Agassiz School facility. In spite of the obvious need, the video had a sensitive eye to the historical value of the current site and the adaptability of the children to the obvious inconveniences.

The report from the Task Force on Renovations to the Agassiz School was presented, questions and comments were solicited, and it was agreed to forward the report to the Superintendent as it was written with a letter to express several minority positions not included in the report: the K-5th Grade option for the school and the siting of the school outside of the neighborhood.

After the Superintendent reviews the report, it will be submitted to the School Committee for review and submission to the City Manager's office. The City Manager will have final approval of the Agassiz School Site.

What comes next in this process was discussed, and Ellen Semenoff from the City Manager's office agreed to help arrange a meeting between the City Manager and the Task Force as soon as possible. The Task Force will continue its tenure, and in meeting with the City Manager will develop a process that will be shared with the Agassiz community. The neighborhood council stressed the need to participate in the site selection, rather than react to a site selection with no participation.

[Summaries of the Agassiz Renovation Task Force Report were mailed out as a January Special Edition of The Whistler. If you would like a copy please call 349-6287.]

Neighborhood News

Oxford Street Traffic Problems

Please Note: The main agenda item for the Wednesday, February 12 (7:30 PM, 20 Sacramento St) will be traffic and related problems on Oxford St. Astrid Dodds, of Wendell St, has submitted the following report.

A Brief History

The neighborhood has lobbied for many years for improved safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers on Oxford St. In 1986, 25 residents petitioned the Traffic and Parking Department to extend the no parking zone from 20 to 10 feet back from corners of the east side of the Wendell/Oxford intersection. Visibility improved somewhat but not enough. Attempts at that time to do the same thing on the west side (on Oxford and Wendell) were resisted by Traffic and Parking. They also refused

Next Meeting of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council
February 12 Wednesday
7:30 P.M.
Agassiz Community Center
20 Sacramento St, Cambridge MA 02138

Agenda:
General Business
Oxford St Traffic Concerns (see article below)
Evergood Market
Finest in Meats and Produce
1674 Mass. Ave.

to paint a crosswalk across Oxford at Wendell. Meetings with Traffic and Parking in 1986-87 were supposed to have resulted in greater policy enforcement of the 25mph speed limit on Oxford St., but it is unclear that that ever happened.

An important victory for neighborhood lobbying was the installation in September 1990 of a traffic light at Forest/Oxford, the site of numerous accidents. As of October 1991, there had been no accidents at that intersection since the light was installed.

At meetings in 1989-90, Traffic and Parking pointed to the newly synchronized lights on Mass. Ave. as its best hope that traffic volume might eventually be reduced on Oxford St., long known as an alternative route for drivers anxious to get to Porter Square faster.

Continued neighborhood complaints about Oxford St.—particularly south of Sacramento—resulted in a November 1990 resolution by City Councillor Alice Wolf that "the City Manager be requested to urge Traffic and Parking Commissioner Teso to work closely with the ANC to resolve continuing community concerns about traffic on Oxford St., especially near Wendell and Everett Streets." A similar resolution by Councillor Myers—focusing on the co-existence of bicycles and cars on Oxford St.—asked for a detailed study of Oxford St.

T and P's January 1991 "Study" of Oxford St.

Dated January 1991 (but conveyed to City Manager Healy in March 1991 and to the ANC in the late spring), this study from the Cambridge Traffic and Parking Department is a disappointment. Much of the "data" is 4 years old and some of the raw data is illegible or unlabeled. The 1991 "study" devotes more space to reviewing a decade of neighborhood concerns than to suggesting how current ones might be solved—making it appear as though Traffic and Parking was more anxious to enumerate its past actions than it was to address current neighborhood concerns. Two items from the 1991 "study" illustrate what we are up against:

1. Re pedestrian volume at Oxford/Wendell: Traffic and Parking says it observed quite a few pedestrians crossing Wendell at Oxford but none crossing Oxford at Wendell, an "observation" which is either disingenuous or pitifully ignorant of the reality of pedestrian life in its refusal to allow for the possibility that many pedestrians avoid crossing Oxford at Wendell because it is so dangerous.

2. Re the speed limit: the 1991 "study's" response to late 1990 concern about speeding on Oxford St. was to cite a 1987 letter Traffic and Parking wrote to the Police Department requesting more diligent enforcement. Traffic and Parking, steadfastly refusing any responsibility for inter-agency coordination, declined to use the report as an opportunity to tell the neighborhood what the Police Department has been doing in the intervening four years.

An ANC response to the 1991 study

The purpose of the February 12 meeting will be to assess and respond to the study. In preparation for this meeting Astrid Dodds took photos at the Oxford/Wendell Intersection. She also, in October 1991, invited Agassiz residents with an opinion about a traffic light at Oxford/Wendell to respond by phone to a questionnaire in The Whistler. Nearly all of the respondents were strongly in favor of a traffic light at Wendell and Oxford.

Astrid suggests that the ANC emphasize the following:
1. The 1991 Traffic and Parking "study" was an insult to the concern and integrity of neighborhood

Agassiz-School Building Update

See "Council Meeting Notes"(page one) which provide a report on the most recent meeting. To receive a summary of the Report from the Agassiz School Renovation Task Force, call ANC at 349-6287 or you may stop in at 20 Sacramento St. to read the complete 64 page report.
residents who have tried for a decade to make Oxford St. safer.
2). No further "studies" of Oxford St. be done without the participation of Agassiz residents in every aspect of their design and execution.
3). The ANC will no longer negotiate directly with the Traffic and Parking on a piecemeal basis. We want to develop a short and long term plan for ameliorating Oxford St. problems that will be coordinated by someone outside of Traffic and Parking [City Manager's Office] and includes all other city agencies/institutions involved: Traffic and Parking, Department of Public Works, Police Department, Lesley College, Harvard University and in the case of upper Oxford, the City of Somerville, and whoever "owns" the bridge over the railroad tracks.
4). Additional incentive for a coordinated approach is the fact that the October 1991 City of Cambridge Bicycle Committee Report suggests that Oxford St. become a major connector in a proposed city wide bicycle route. It is of the utmost importance that the bicycle lobby be made aware soon of the necessity of working very closely with this and other neighborhoods through which the proposed route goes.
5). We should seize the occasion of our response to the Traffic and Parking 1991 "Study" to rename the Agassiz Traffic Committee "The Agassiz Traffic and Pedestrian Quality of Life Committee" [suggestions that translate to a better acronym warmly welcome] to provide greater balance between auto traffic and pedestrians and bicyclists.

An OXFORD STREET MASTER PLAN will be developed. A draft of this plan that includes both long and short range goals, as well as the narrative section of the 1991 "study" will be sent before the February 12 ANC meeting to all those on the traffic mailing list. To be included, please call the council at 349-6287. You may also stop by 20 Sacramento to see the 1991 Traffic and Parking "Study" with appendix included.

Community Room To Open
The Agassiz Neighborhood Council will be moving some afterschool programs for older children into the new community space located North Hall. Harvard Law School, a dormitory [formerly the Quality Inn] located at 1651 Mass. Ave. Because construction has not been completed, the move will be temporary (until late May) to relieve overcrowding of afterschool programs currently located in the Agassiz School.

Look for news on a community wide open house sometime this spring. There will be a major event in the fall to introduce the wider Cambridge community to our new facility when we are permanently settled, and all construction is complete.

Harvard will do some construction work in mid March, then they will resume construction work in late May. All work will be completed by September. This includes a final coat of paint to cover the light green primer, landscaping, pool demolition, reconstruction of community entry way and walkways, installation of an elevator and removal of old signs.

School Committee Confirms Principal
The Cambridge School Committee confirmed the appointment of Eva Paddock as Principal of the Agassiz School at their January 21st meeting. Ms. Paddock is expected to begin at Agassiz as soon as a reasonable transition can be worked out from her current position as Principal of the Steward School in Topsfield.

Ms. Paddock is a former teacher at the Agassiz School and taught in the Cambridge Public Schools for 15 years before beginning her current position in 1986.

Phase VI Sewer Project Stalls Out
A letter to update the ANC on Phase VI of the Sewer project is reproduced below. It is from Commissioner David Haley, Department of Public Works and dated 1/21/92. This project, which will separate the sewers sanitary run off from rain run off in the Agassiz neighborhood, was originally scheduled to be completed this year.
"In response to your letter of October 31, 1991, concerning the Phase VI Sewer Project, I would like to update you on the status of the project.

The technical specifications for the project were completed in the spring of 1991 and all permits have been obtained by the City of Cambridge as of January 1992. The Department of Public Works is prepared to bid this project pending state and/or local funding.

The delay in commencing this thirty eight million dollar project is a result of the Commonwealth's inability to enact legislation to help Cambridge pay for the cost of this project.

I recently met with the City Manager and the City's Chief Fiscal Officer to explore ways to proceed without any funding from the state.

Cambridge was slated to receive considerable funding under the past program (up to 75% reimbursement of eligible costs) under the plan originally enacted by the former Governor.

Unfortunately, legislation was never enacted and currently there are proposals before the legislature to fund some portion of the costs.

The City is unable to commence work on the project without some assurances that the state funding will be available to help offset the tremendous cost of this project.

If you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to contact Mr. Jeffrey Nutting at the Public Works Department at 349-4810.

I will keep you informed of any change in the status of this project."

The project will replace and enlarge antiquated pipes as well as separate systems. Many low lying neighborhood residences are plagued by flooding problems with each heavy rain. Since the ANC began documentation in 1985, there have been three major floods in the neighborhood. Other members of the Cambridge community, including mid Cambridge, have been effected by the inadequate sewer system.

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**Crime Statistics**

As promised, Commissioner Perry Anderson provided us with a map of the neighborhood that placed crimes for the month of December. It is reproduced below:

**City Wide News and Information**

**Forum for Parents of Children Age 8-11**

A new enterprise in Cambridge, PARENTS FORUM, will provide discussion groups which will address questions on family life issues. PARENTS FORUM will target parents of pre-teens because this age represents a crucial and often neglected period in youngsters' development. Parents will have a chance to build a network of peer support for themselves, in a positive setting, before the natural challenges of adolescence appear in the family scene.

Informational open houses are being held Thursdays from 5:30-7:30 PM at the Children's Workshop, 1963 Mass. Ave. Parents of 8-12 year olds are especially invited to drop in and find out about the discussion groups to be offered by PARENTS FORUM.

Christine L. Bates is working with Eve Sullivan to establish this independent, unaffiliated program. Sean Barrett, a student at MIT, is also working on the program. For more information call 864-3602.
Harvard President Responds to Neighborhoods

Members of the Joint Committee for Neighborhood-Harvard Consultation sent a letter to Harvard President Neil Rudenstine (see The Whistler, January 1992). Excerpts from his response are printed below.

"Thank you for taking the time to write to me about your views of Harvard Square and the role that Harvard can help to play in shaping the Square's environment. I read with real interest . . . the letter co-signed by the four neighborhood organizations . . . I want to assure you of my strong interest in the issues that you raise, and of the University's willingness to work with the City and with community groups to help plan for a genuinely cooperative future."

"Virtually any change in our environment is likely to create some degree of tension: even within the university community, opinions differ concerning areas that lend themselves to growth, and areas that should be preserved as valuable open spaces. Listening to all views, and attempting to be sensitively responsive to sometimes conflicting opinions will not always be easy, but I believe be nonetheless possible."

"Meanwhile, I very much look forward to joining you at a monthly meeting of the Joint Committee for Neighborhood-Harvard Consultation in order to discuss these issues more directly. In the meantime, I hope that we continue to seek our areas of mutual agreement, working together to create projects that have benefits for the whole community."

MASS SAVE Offers Home Energy Survey

DID YOU KNOW that the best "NO FEE" offer available to Cambridge residents, involves an educational and cost-saving service provided by your local utility company to all households regardless of income? MASS SAVE will provide you with a home energy survey, a computerized sheet of energy-saving recommendations for your home or your income property, plus provide you with $30 worth of energy and water saving materials per household! To take advantage of a "free" service (that you have already paid for), call MASS SAVE at 1-800 632-8300.

Cambridge Housing Authority Receives Grants

The Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) has received two HUD grants totalling $8,190,000, for the development of 90 low income housing units in Cambridge. CHA is actively seeking to acquire existing properties and to collaborate in the construction of new public housing in the city.

### Council Programs

#### New Programs for 10-14 Year Olds

**JAZZ DANCE To Begin for 10-14 Year Olds**

A new JAZZ DANCE CLASS will be offered beginning Monday February 24 for youth of either sex in grades 5-8. Classes will be held in the new Community Room at the former Quality Inn, now North Hall, Harvard Law School, located at 1651 Mass. Ave.

The class, taught by Marcie Miltier, will run from 3:30-4:30 P.M. It will incorporate fun, energizing basic jazz dance steps and warm ups with improvisation and some freestyle dancing. Contemporary music will be used, and participants are encouraged to bring their favorite music. Cost will be $56 for 8 sessions, and scholarships are available. Call 349-6287 for more information or to register.

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### CLIP AND SAVE 1992

**CITY COUNCILLORS**

CITY COUNCIL
- Mayor Kenneth Reeves
- Vice Mayor Ed Cyr
- Councillor Frank Duehay
- Councillor Jonathan Myers
- Councillor Sheila Russell
- Councillor Walter Sullivan
- Councillor Tim Toomey
- Councillor William Walsh
- Councillor Alice Wolf
- Call the Mayor at 349-4321
- Call City Councillors at 349-4280

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**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

SCHOOL COMMITTEE
- Chairperson Kenneth Reeves
- Vice Chairperson Larry Weinstein
- Henrietta Davis
- Fred Fantini
- David Maher
- James Rafferty
- Denise Simmons
- Call the School Committee at 349-6620
DRAMA SUMMER CAMP FOR 10-14 YEAR OLDS

The ANC plans to institute an afternoon summer camp in performing arts for youth entering 6th grade through entering 9th grade beginning this July. This program, under the direction of Carol Hantman, will be held at the Agassiz School for a small group of interested students five day per week for five weeks. It will provide, in a format similar to the Advanced Drama Workshop for the Agassiz Afterschool Players, an intense drama experience that will include stage craft, scenery design and other adjunct dramatic activities as well as working on acting technique using improvisation and exercises in voice and body control.

Although the only prerequisite is enthusiasm and interest in mounting a final performance (the shape of which will be determined by the group), some experience in drama would be useful, though not essential. For information call 349-6287.

Afterschool Programs Begin Fall Registration

You may register now for both full and part-time fall afterschool programs run by the Agassiz Neighborhood Council for children in grades K-4. Please call the office for more information and specific brochures.

We are proud of our long established, well run and comprehensive afterschool programs, and we encourage all prospective parents to visit them. Children may be bussed to our programs from any public school in the Cambridge system, regardless of the school’s closing time. Call 349-6287 for information and brochures.

Neighborhood Condo for Sale

3 bedrooms/6-7 rooms/1.5 baths/ 2nd and 3rd floors of a 2 family; sunny; deck; parking; very near Agassiz. $185,000. Call Anne Strong at 491-4684

Video Volunteers Wanted

The ANC has begun to work on a new Cambridge Community Television Show entitled “Cambridge Community News”. This show will highlight a variety of newsworthy stories with in-depth coverage from all Cambridge neighborhoods.
Marcie Mitler Offers Classes

RECLAIMING YOUR BODY
Healing work for women with histories of sexual abuse and violence. This is a therapeutic movement and exercise class in a safe and protected environment for survivors to develop a more healthful relationship with their bodies. We will use music that is empowering and we will create movement that corresponds. This workshop will give the participants an opportunity to be in their bodies and to feel a sense of personal power and self-mastery. Cambridge YWCA Tuesdays 6:30-8 P.M. Wednesdays 9:30-11 A.M.. Call 491-6050.

RECLAIMING YOUR BODY one day workshop
Saturday February 15 1-4 PM $30.
This workshop will include relaxation, visualization, open discussion, and an introduction to the "Reclaiming Your Body" program. The focus will be increasing self awareness and improving body image. We will spend time talking about our relationships with our bodies and with food, and we will explore new ways of self-expression. These workshops will be run monthly. They will be a combination support gathering and class. Call Marcie Mitler at 497-5283.

Lesley College News

Tutoring Assistance for Agassiz School
The ANC, the Agassiz School and Lesley College recently collaborated on a project that provided tutoring assistance to 4th and 5th grade students in Susan Hughes class at the Agassiz School.

This project paired Lesley undergraduates with Agassiz students who were working on their first research paper assignment. The success of this venture was evident in the quality of work that was produced by the students and the feeling of accomplishment garnered by the Lesley students as they performed a valid community service.

This program will begin again in the fall. Special thanks to Steven Winter, Susan Hughes, Jennifer Kilson-Page and the volunteers of Lesley College: Michelle Darbyshire, Jennifer Adams and Melissa Hartley, for showing how neighborhood institutions can join together to produce programs beneficial to the community.

Cultural Happenings

Playwrights Platform Upcoming Events

The Agassiz Neighborhood Council hosts the Playwright Platform on Sunday evenings at 7:30 PM in the Agassiz Community Center at 20 Sacramento St.. Members present semi staged readings of new plays and works-in-progress by playwrights from the New England area.

After each reading refreshments are served, and the audience is cordially invited to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the play in a moderated discussion.

Admission is free and all are welcome.

February 2-A Fun Evening of Dracula Scenes
"Dracula 1990" by Skip Maloney
"Lucy's Attire" by Janet Kenney

February 9 "The Latecomer"
by Genevieve Fraser

February 16 Shorties Night
(pieces under 10 minutes)
Works by John O'Brien, Daryl Janes and more.
February 23 Vacation Week - No readings*

SELF PROPELLED DUST
Recent works by Jon Cummings. Agassiz resident and artist, will be featured in this one man show entitled: "Self Propelled Dust" to open in the Sacramento St. Gallery, 20 Sacramento St. Cambridge, on February 3rd through the 21st. The show features eight wall sculptures from natural substances.

The gallery will be open between 9-5 PM weekdays, and the opening reception will be held on Saturday February 15 from 4-6 PM. Call 349-6287 for more information.
Community Calendar

February 1992

February 2 Sunday and February 9 Sunday
7:30 P.M. Playwrights Platform
Agassiz Community Center 20 Sacramento St.

February 12 Wednesday
7:30 PM Agassiz Neighborhood Council Meeting
Agassiz Community Center 20 Sacramento St.
(See page one for meeting agenda)

February 12 Wednesday
Agassiz School 12:45 P.M. Closing

February 15 Saturday
4-6 P.M. "Self Propelled Dust" Opening
Jon Cummings-Artist
Sacramento St. Gallery 20 Sacramento St.

February 16 Sunday
7:30 P.M. Playwrights Platform
Agassiz Community Center 20 Sacramento St.

February 17 Monday
President's Day Holiday

February 17-21
Vacation Week Cambridge Public School

February 1992

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

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