ANC NEWS

Notes from the December 17th ANC Meeting

Zoning Proposal

Janet Rustow, ANC Chair, opened the meeting and introduced Joel Bard, who explained the work of a city wide group working on a zoning initiative that would fine tune the zoning code neighborhood by neighborhood. Joel introduced John Pitkin, who has been working as a representative from Mid Cambridge on this zoning project. Joel explained some zoning concepts that non experts may not understand. One term commonly not understood is FAR which means floor area ratio. It describes density: a building of 10,000 square feet has the same FAR if it is one 10,000 SF story, two 5,000 SF stories or four 2,500 SF stories. After a brief explanation of the basic zones in Cambridge, they handed out a preliminary proposal for some zoning changes. They represent fairly modest adjustments to the existing code. A 25% bonus over base district FAR to expand the “affordable housing bonus” is proposed as is downzoning of FAR in all zones not recently rezoned. Transition requirements between zones are proposed as are height limits in zones that presently have none. A public design review is proposed for major projects in all zones. Institutional zoning is left as is to discourage expansion elsewhere.

City Councillor Kathy Born was in attendance. She supported the work of the committee, and emphasized the need to develop appropriate zoning before a problem arose. A recent development dispute on Limnaean Street, so hotly contested by residents, could have been avoided if the zoning had been less favorable to a developer. Zoning should be seen as a tool for planning.

Other neighborhoods represented in the writing of the proposal include: Neighborhood Nine, Mid Cambridge, Porter Square, Riverside, Neighborhood Four, Agassiz, and East. Joel said that the proposal was being introduced at meetings such as ours in other Cambridge neighborhoods in order to seek feedback. Joel said that the residents of each neighborhood are the experts, and he hopes that Agassiz residents will get involved in the process of responding to the document, which is just beginning.

Agassiz was one of the first neighborhood groups visited, but all neighborhoods will soon be visited. After information is collected and ideas are incorporated, a zoning petition will be written and presented to City Council. The goal is to have the petition finished by March, although this is an optimistic deadline.

It was agreed to revisit this issue again at the February council meeting (Tuesday February 18) when discussion on the actual proposed zoning changes could take place. Joel and John will provide further information for the February Whistler and Terry DeLancey agreed to send out a mailing to interested community members. [If you have interest in participating in this process, please call Terry at 349-6287 for more information and to be on the mailing list.]

Affordable Housing Discussion

Before Janet opened the discussion, she said that Roger Herzog, Housing Director for Cambridge Community Development, would be with us in January, and the main points from tonight would be sent on to

Next ANC Council Meeting
January 21, Tuesday
7:30 p.m.
Agassiz School Dining Hall
28 Sacramento Street entrance

Agenda:
1. Nancy Woods from Library 21 Committee will listen to program ideas for the new library
2. Roger Herzog, Director of Housing, Cambridge Community Development will respond to neighborhood questions on affordable housing
landlords for those facing increases they cannot afford and ultimately eviction?

What is the City's plan for dealing with the displaced residents if evicted?

How soon can residents move into the vacant new affordable housing?

How are residents for new affordable housing chosen, using what instruments?

How do residents sign up for affordable housing?

What will happen to tenant rents if they are not income eligible and live in the newly designated affordable housing? What if they do not want to reveal their finances?

Will the affordable housing be kept strictly for moderate income or will low income tenants be placed there?

How will the affordable rents be determined, with what instruments?

Will there be sliding fees? Market rates for non eligible tenants? Section 8 vouchers?

Terry DeLancey asked the group for volunteers to help refine the questions developed from this discussion and add others not yet on the list. Terry will send a draft to everyone who attended the meeting for further feedback prior to sending it off to Roger. [Anyone who would like to take part in this process may call Terry at 349-6287.]

Path from Sacramento Place to Sacramento Field
This fall Harvard put on the market the house on Sacramento Place situated next to the path that leads to Sacramento Field. Harvard contacted the neighborhood and said due to this sale, the status of the path must be decided. They said that if the neighborhood wanted the path, it would be necessary to make a formal request. The ANC sent a letter in mid December to the City of Cambridge, copied to Harvard Real Estate and Planning and signed by seven Agassiz community and school leaders. The letter requested that the Sacramento Place path be preserved as an access way to the field for the sake of safety (it is the only other entrance) and convenience.

The tenant who lives in the house is in negotiations to purchase that property from Harvard. He told the council that he was quoted a price by Harvard for the property before Harvard had agreed to pass the property over to the City and felt the price should be reduced because of that. He proposed that the neighborhood would be better served with a path that would run through the Community Garden beside the brick row houses on Sacramento St., and he suggested a well designed path and fence, possibly with a decorative trellis. He asked the neighborhood to support this proposal.

It was generally agreed that this kind of support could not be given without representation from the garden and abutters, as well as the City of Cambridge, who will soon own all the property involved. The idea of a path had come up in the planning of the school, but it had been rigorously opposed by gardeners and abutters. Since the path had been in use for well over 20 years, there would be some legal question involved if it were to be removed as a path. It was suggested that the tenant contact the City and the Garden to discuss this idea.

The request in the initial ANC letter to the City will stand, unless the community is assured that construction of a new path can be accomplished.
**Garfield St. Housing Foreshadows Critical Issues**

Some of us can remember back to the planning meetings of the Garfield St. housing project. The Agassiz Neighborhood Council at that time was very divided about their approval of affordable housing on that corner, and many residents were deeply disturbed with the council who voted to support the project which they believed was the greater good over the wishes of the abutters to resist it. The process left unresolved neighborhood issues, and the ANC had some soul searching to do.

JoAnn Hoffman, past ANC Chair, in a paper written in 1990, provides us with a summary of the issues the ANC would struggle with for the next several years. (See page 2-Special Note.) The following (slightly edited for clarity) was written by JoAnn Hoffman:

My interest in this public policy question was sparked by the April 11, 1990 meeting, which I attended. “Affordable housing” became a loaded subject, with many different angles and themes. After looking at this site question, so many more unanswered questions come to mind. Shouldn’t the CHA have had a meeting with abutters soon after the ANC meeting just to show good faith and open discussion? When the abutters and Garfield residents say they don’t want affordable housing on that site, is part of it in the NIMBY effect: not in my back yard? When the CHA says there are 5,000 families on the waiting list for affordable housing in Cambridge and over half of those live outside the City, should residents and taxpayers question who is eligible for affordable housing? If rent control is one method of providing affordable housing in the City, should there be greater limits put on who gets rent controlled apartments?

The role of the ANC has to be questioned. How can the council speak for the opinions of the neighborhood? Did one person overstep their boundaries by claiming to speak for the neighborhood when approving the affordable housing idea? And how are they to be held accountable?

**Garfield Construction Update**

Foundation work is currently in progress, and if the foundation can be finished before it gets too cold, work will continue through the winter.

Please remember not to park in front of the construction gate on Garfield St. It is the only access for construction vehicles, and when the work is done, it will be the driveway into the parking lot for the houses. The driveway was blocked by a car with out of state plates the day cement was being poured. Rather than have it towed, construction workers picked the car up and moved it out of the way.

**Thanks to Star Market**

The ANC has written a letter of thanks to Keith Shaw, Manager, Beacon Street Star Market. He has been a good neighbor in very many ways including placing a copy machine and a cash register in his store. He came to our summer barbecue with a watermelon boat, and he came to our Thanksgiving Dinner with a sheet cake, then he stayed and carved turkeys with the Star Market Service Manager Brian Demers. He helped with a neighborhood food drive for the hungry, and he helped set up an ANC Star Share fund-raiser.

Thanks to Keith and the Star Market from your neighbors!
A Scene from THE TWENTY-FIFTY ANNUAL
THANKSGIVING POT LUCK FEAST 11/26

Traffic and Transportation
Snow and Access to the Porter Square T

For years the lack of snow removal from the sidewalk that runs from the Porter Square T stop down Somerville Ave. and across the bridge onto Oxford Street has been a cause for concern to all pedestrians who use the sidewalk. Last year, the sidewalk was extremely dangerous even for the sure footed to travel, and this year after the first snowstorm, the walk was a bumpy sheet of ice, not even sanded or salted.

The MBTA does shovel their required area around the T station, and the remaining sidewalk is the responsibility of Somerville.

The ANC has contacted the Porter Square Neighbors Association who agreed to address the issue and take some action on the problem. The ANC will also send a letter to the City of Cambridge requesting assistance on the problem.

Lesley Shuttle Bus Route to Porter Square
Alan Fein, Vice President for Administration and Finance at Lesley College, has advised us that the shuttle bus will be off Mellen St. and on Mass. Ave. for a trial period beginning February 1. The bus will pick up at Mellen Street and proceed down Mass. Ave. to Porter Exchange. On the return trip, it will take Mass. Ave. to Everett St., then turn into the Everett Street Garage, owned by Harvard. Permission has been extended by Harvard to use their pass through to exit on Mass. Ave.

Parking meters will be removed at the Mellen St. bus stop and a temporary bus shelter will be installed. Beginning on February 1, there will be a three month trial period for the new route.

This new route represents the work done by the City and Lesley to get the shuttle bus off Mellen St. and onto Mass. Ave. as agreed at the November 19th council meeting. Thanks to all stakeholders for their cooperation.

City Wide

Library 21 Committee Considers Programs

The Library 21 Committee co-chaired by resident Nancy Woods and Deputy City Manager Rich Rossi, is searching for ideas on what kinds of services and programs people want from their library. Major renovations are planned for the main branch, but the building is not the only important part of this process.

Here are some of the questions the Library 21 Committee would like you to consider:
1. How important are the following to you and the City are the following roles that public libraries typically play? Are there others?
   *Community activities center
   *Center for information about Cambridge and neighborhoods
   *Educational support center for students of all ages
   *Civic buildings for events and gatherings
   *Recreational reading center for best sellers and popular materials
   *Discovery and learning center for preschool children
   *Access to cutting edge technology information
   *Information center for Cambridge businesses
   *General information center for Cambridge residents
   *Research center for scholars and researchers
   *Comfortable, quiet place to read, think and work
2. What kinds of services do you personally want?
3. How do we ensure that services reach people of all economic and educational levels?

So far there have been many workshops and meetings all over the city to get citizen ideas. This month Nancy will be visiting us to get specific Agassiz input on programs and services. Other communities have suggested check outs by computer with pick up later, activities for 6-8th graders, internet pen pals, mini branch services, television provided to view City meetings, and services for career development. Most common requests are for more comfortable and quiet places to read and more computers.
Agassiz Public School

Principal Search

Joe Costello, Agassiz parent, has advised the Agassiz Parents Group on line that a meeting took place on December 18th for members of the committees involved in hiring the principal. Several candidates have been identified, and a representative of the search firm was in town last December to brief the resume screening and interview committees.

They anticipate that interviews will be held the second week in January.

Kindergarten Registration Begins for FALL

Registration for children who will be entering kindergarten for the first time in the fall begins on January 13. You must register as early as possible to ensure that you get your school choice. Cambridge does not have school districts, and parents choose schools based on choice. For more information on this process contact the Parent Information Center at 349-6550 or 349-6400.

We Have A Winner!

Rebecca Richardson was the winner in an art contest held by the Cambridge Trust bank. The contest was held for school age children to submit pictures with a winter theme. Winners would have their photos and drawings published in the Cambridge Trust 1997 Calendar. Rebecca's picture will be in the new calendar. Rebecca also won a $50 Savings Bond.

Agassiz Community School

Afterschool

The start of the New Year finds the Agassiz Community School in full swing (sometimes literally as it turns out!) We have a record number of children enrolled this year in the Afterschool and have reached capacity in the first through fifth grade program on certain days of the week.

Roughly half of the children enrolled in the Afterschool program are full time (five days per week) and the other half come three or fewer days per week. Also, approximately 40% of the Afterschool children attend the Agassiz School and 60% arrive by bus every afternoon from almost every public school in Cambridge.

Classes for 6-8th grade students have also enjoyed increased enrollment. Students can choose classes in Cooking, Illustrative Drawing, and Creative Writing. This year terms run for an average of eight weeks, three or four times a year. This system provides the scheduling flexibility necessary to older children who often participate in a variety of short term activities throughout the year and thus are unable to make long term commitments.

Preschool

The Sacramento Street Preschool provides quality preschool in a half day program. Parents are able to choose scheduling options of two, three or five mornings a week. The part week option, which was developed in response to parent requests, has proved to be very popular.

For information on any programs, call the ANC at 349-6287.

Announcements

Experienced Science Tutor. Very reasonable rates; High school and college math and physics too. Call Farzi 876-0509.

CCTV

If your New Year's resolutions have anything to do with learning a new skill, meeting new people or getting your point across, call Cambridge Community Television at 661-6900, you can join the January orientation on January 7th at 6:30 p.m.

If you are a Cambridge resident you can get basic training on video cameras and equipment, access the professionally equipped studio, and now access to a new computer center for very reasonable rates.

Porter Square

Porter Square Neighbors Association meets on the third Thursday at the Metropolitan Baptist Church, 16 Beech Street, corner of Orchard. Next meeting will be held on January 16 from 7-9 p.m.
Sacramento Street Gallery
January Show Opens 1/10

For information on any programs, call the ANC at 349-6287.

THROUGH CARIBBEAN EYES. Oil Paintings by Winston Breedy will open on January 10 with a reception from 5:00-9:00 p.m. The show features landscapes and city scenes of Barbados and New England that reflect the intense colors and vibrant culture of the artist's native island. Whether painting Newberry Street scenes, rural Vermont, or the Kadooment Festival in Barbados, Winston brings a strong sense of color, warmth, and rhythm to his work.

Winston R. Breedy emigrated to Cambridge MA in 1994 from a small village in Barbados. He is self taught as an artist. The show will run through February 21. Gallery hours are 9-5 on weekdays, and special hours Saturday and Sunday February 1 and 2 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Introducing Art: A Performance Series for Children

The Agassiz Neighborhood Council proudly presents the National Marionette Theatre's adaptation of the classic tale
“ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP”
JANUARY 15TH
Agassiz School Stage, 28 Sacramento St., entrance
2:00 P.M. ADMISSION $1.00 No reserved seating
Adults Welcome. Call 349-6287 for more information.
This date is the Cambridge Public School early release day for January.

From the evil magician's remote mountain aerie to a hidden enchanted treasure cavern, from the back streets of Baghdad to the Sultan's glittering palace, audiences will be transported by this magical production into a Middle Eastern world of High adventure as they watch the exciting story of Aladdin unfold. With a musical score by Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin, this lavishly produced Arabian Nights classic has stunning sets, beautiful costumes, imaginative lighting and special effects. This is a family theatre production not to be missed!

Director David Syrotdak has toured the National Marionette Theatre worldwide. The show promises lots of surprises and special effects. Come and see it!

This project is funded by the Agassiz Neighborhood Council with support from the Mass. Cultural Council.

LOOK AT WHAT ELSE IS COMING!!!
On the Agassiz Stage for Kids this Winter
February 20th at 2 p.m., Thursday
Hip Hop Festival
March 16th at 2 p.m., Sunday,
Cuchullan, a traditional Irish music, song and dance group.

Aladdin coming January 15
DONORS 1996

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Many thanks to all donors. Your contributions support the COMMUNITY FUND, that this year has provided money for new sewer covers, a recycling fair, and planters for the Agassiz School. Other activities funded by contributions include the Sacramento St. Gallery, Introducing Art: A Performance Series for Children, and the Scholarship Fund for children's programs.

Send your tax deductible contributions to the Agassiz Neighborhood Council, 20 Sacramento St. Cambridge, MA 02138.

FRESH POND BALLET
Nina Alonso Hathaway
Studio
1798A Mass. Ave. • Cambridge
491-5865
• Classical Ballet
• Pre-Ballet to pre-professional
• Adult Classes

Your Neighborhood Realtor
Elizabeth Browning
For Your Real Estate Needs

Gold Hill Banker
1730 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
864-4430 x 354
Hunneman & Company
Community Calendar for January 1997

January 1
NEW YEARS DAY - No School

January 10
5-9 p.m.
Through Caribbean Eyes, Oil Paintings by Winston Breedy
Sacramento Street Gallery Opening
20 Sacramento St. (see page 6 for gallery hours)

January 15
2:00 p.m.
"Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp"
Performed by the national Marionette Theatre
Agassiz School Stage, 28 Sacramento Street entrance

January 20
MARTIN LUTHER KING BIRTHDAY - No School

January 21
6:30 p.m.
ANC Board Meeting - Open to the Public
7:30 p.m.
ANC Monthly Meeting (see page one for details)
Agassiz School Dining Hall
28 Sacramento St. entrance

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