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ANC News

Stories from the April 15th ANC Meeting

Janet Rustow, ANC chairperson, opened the meeting and announced the slate of candidates for Board of Directors:

Sue Bergin, Secretary and Director
Lorraine Brewer, Director
Paul Lenart, Parent Representative and Director
Janet Rustow, Chairperson and Director
Christa Thomas, Director

This slate will be elected at the Annual Meeting that will be held on May 20th, 7:30 p.m. in the Agassiz School Dining Hall, 28 Sacramento St. entrance.

Terry DeLancey announced that she had received plans for the renovations proposed to build two new guest rooms and a conservatory at the Mary Prentiss Inn on Prentiss Street, and invited participants to take a look at the plans.

Sewer Separation Construction

Janet introduced Annette Rodibaugh from the Department of Public Works (DPW). Annette introduced Anne Daughaday, a DPW engineer who updated the ANC on the sewer separation project. She estimated that the project would begin on Oxford St. in fall 1998. Anne passed around a map for the neighborhood that showed various upcoming City projects including specific streets that are scheduled for sewer separation in the Agassiz neighborhood. Not all Agassiz streets are included, but Anne said that once the pipes are viewed by video and studied, more streets may be added. They expect to add a number of catch basins.

Rain water in some Agassiz residences drains off into the sewers, rather than onto the street. This is often the case in flat roof buildings. When the separation project is completed, residents will be expected to reroute the storm run off away from the sewer connection. The DPW has a program that will assist residents with that cost, and when the time comes more information will be provided.

JUNE 17th Save that date!
RON WATSON, Cambridge Police Commissioner, will address the neighborhood at the ANC June meeting

The City's goal is to get as much water into the storm drains as possible. This water flows to the Charles River. The sanitary sewer water is metered, and the City must pay for its treatment.

Anne reiterated DPW Assistant Commissioner Steve White's words, that there will be ample time for residents to participate in the process. Anne said that neighborhood participation was welcome, since residents could usually point out the poor drainage places and other problem issues.

Street water from Beacon Street at the Star Market in Somerville presents problems for our neighborhood since water runs toward our streets. Anne said the DPW is working with Somerville to deal with some of those issues, although Somerville does not at this time have any plans for sewer separation there.

Sidewalks

Streets that are dug up for sewer construction will receive new sidewalks when they are repaved. The DPW policy is to replace the sidewalk with original material. The DPW is willing to discuss material used in sidewalk construction. The ongoing issue of "bricks versus concrete" was discussed, and the material for streets will be a topic for discussion in the future. Some issues that drive the discussion on sidewalk material include aesthetics, safe pedestrian passage, maintenance and cost. Another unanswered question is whether the decision to use one or another material will be...
driven by the residents on the street or a wider group of pedestrians who must use the sidewalks. As a starting point, Anne agreed to develop a map that would show the materials the DPW is planning to use on each street, and the neighborhood could respond to this.

Terry DeLancey advised the DPW that another street, Howland (a small section), was added to the list of Hammond, Gorham, Bryant and Scott as one more street that lacked sidewalks. Anne said the sidewalks provide curbs that are important in directing the rain water into the catch basins.

[The map, depicting various DPW projects, will be posted in the kiosk in front of the Agassiz School.]

Trees

Larry Acosta was then introduced. He is the new Arborist for the City of Cambridge. Larry hopes to encourage the city to develop a fund for maintenance of our trees. The April 1 storm has brought much attention to the city's trees, and that is a good thing. He feels that the current policy in the city is reactive, and problems are dealt with as they come up. Trees are planted but there is no planned maintenance after planting. An ongoing program will provide regular attention to our trees.

Larry will do assessments of trees with neighbors in “neighborhood walks” where residents can discuss what needs to be done and what the city can do for the trees in public places.

The Cambridge street tree program was described by Larry. If a resident is willing to care for a tree with watering and mulching, the DPW will order, deliver and plant that tree at the appropriate time of year in a place chosen by the resident (with approval from the City). The cost for a tree is $140, and the site must be a public street. There are five varieties to choose from, although some sites will be best for specific trees. The current choices for trees are now: silver linden, sweet gum, honey locust red or pin oak and shadbush.

There is a Committee on Planting that works with Larry and more recently Larry has been working with the Cambridge Tree Project, a group that hopes to establish an ordinance to protect trees on private property from being cut down for projects like off-street parking. This group is studying the future of the Cambridge tree canopy as a protective cover and for its aesthetics. A neighbor mentioned that the new zoning initiative also seeks to protect green spaces from over development.

Larry said he would be contributing articles to the Cambridge Chronicle in the future, and was interested in public awareness.

There are some things that can be done to save trees that obstruct sidewalks according to Larry. Root pruning will shorten a tree's life but it will allow it to remain. The development of easements on private property for sidewalks that are obstructed will also save trees. There are many strict legal requirements for sidewalks including width and flatness. Ultimately trees must be removed if sidewalks are obstructed.

There will be six pin oaks planted on Sacramento in late May or early June as part of the sewer construction that was just completed. The cost of trees are included in public construction projects including streets, schools, and parks. This is how many new trees are planted. Other trees are planted on main arteries (such as Mass. Ave.) with money that is left over from the street tree program. This money is distributed throughout the city's main roads. Larry suggested that if the neighborhood wants trees to be planted on Mass. Ave. the best way would be to get the businesses to help purchase them through the city's program.

One resident complained about the lack of mature trees on Mass. Ave., and Larry explained that streets like Mass. Ave. are a very bad environment for trees. City trees life span is estimated to be about ten years, which is just the time a tree becomes big enough to provide benefits.

It was also noted that sometimes trees can obstruct vision, traffic and pedestrians becoming a safety hazard. The best course may be to remove a tree. New trees can be planted, and new trees will grow. Larry commented "The right tree for the right place."

ANC Enhances Sewer Project with New Basins

All the sewer separation work is now done on Sacramento Street and Place. Look down and see the new catch basins provided by the Community Fund of the ANC. Trees (six pin oaks) will be planted in late May on the Mass Ave. end of Sacramento.

Projects Map in Kiosk

Check the kiosk in front of the Agassiz School to see the map provided to the ANC by the DPW that shows the major City work projects. There will be future meetings on this subject, but call the ANC at 349-6287 if you have a question after looking at the map.


Neighborhood News

Meet the ANC Board of Directors May 20

Below you will find a brief biography on the candidates for two year Board of Director terms for the ANC. They will be elected at the Annual Meeting in the Agassiz School at 7:30 p.m. on May 20. The entire community is encouraged to attend the meeting. After a very brief business portion, there will be a reception to meet all the ANC board members and have a chance to talk to them individually. Community members will also have a chance to meet Mary Power, new Director of Public Relations at Harvard University.

Sue Bergin, Director and Secretary owns and operates her own photo lab, where she is a master print maker. Sue has two children at the Agassiz School. Originally a resident of Mellen St., Sue now lives in East Cambridge. She returns for a second term on the ANC Board.

Lorraine Brewer will be elected for her first term as Director on the ANC Board. Lorraine has a daughter in the Agassiz School and the Agassiz Afterschool program. Lorraine currently serves on the Agassiz School Council where she organized the first Annual Martin Luther King Breakfast this winter. Lorraine has a background in urban design and planning. She currently works for the Cambridge School Department and lives on Tremont St.

Paul Lenart, Parent Representative and Director, is a freelance musician/composer/audio engineer. He lives on Fayerweather St. and he is the parent of a daughter at the Agassiz School who also attends the Agassiz Afterschool program. Paul returns for a second term.

Janet Rustow, Chairperson and Director, is a clinical social worker for the Faulkner Breast Clinic. She has a daughter at the Agassiz School and in the Agassiz Afterschool program. Janet lives on Sacramento St. and returns for a second term.

Christa Thomas, Director, is the parent of a son who attends the Banneker Charter School and Outback Summer Camp. She lives on Arlington St. and works at Harvard’s Kennedy School in the Innovations in American Government Program. Christa returns for a second term.

Current Directors, not up for election this year are:

Fred Levy - Eustis Street
Kathleen Manion - Newport Road
Sal Sagarese - Cambridge Trust
Joan Squeri - Pearl St.
Fred Willey - Sacramento St.
Steve Kosslyn, from Garfield St., will retire his position as director this May.

Garfield Street Housing to be finished in July

Construction on the Garfield Street Development is moving ahead rapidly. All three floors have been framed, the roof trusses have been placed, and the building is beginning to look like an actual residence. The best news of all is that construction is scheduled to be complete by July - in plenty of time to have families move in for the start of the new school year. Local residents have expressed interest in hosting a welcoming party for our new neighbors so mark your calendars and keep posted for details.

On related issues, the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) is in contact with Ralph Dunphy, Commissioner of Public Works and Eli Tannemen, Manager of the Gulf Station, about filling in part of the curb cut by the Gulf Station on the Garfield St. side and planting some trees there. The CHA is also talking to Harvard University about the condition of the yard at 1705 Mass. Ave. and relaying current residents’ complaints about excessive noise from the students that live there.

Watch for an announcement for another resident meeting with the CHA about the construction process and related issues. If you do not currently receive notices on this topic, call the ANC and ask to be placed on the Garfield St. mailing list. You will be advised of the next meeting, sometime this month.

The loud noise some of you were awakened by on April 14 was due to installation of the gas line. CHA has been working hard to ensure that Metric does not begin work until its permitted time of 8:00 a.m. However, the gas company has the right to begin work as early as 7:00 a.m. on weekdays.

Lesley Dumpster on Wendell Causes Concern

The dumpster that serves the brick apartment building owned by Lesley next to the tennis courts on Wendell Street has been a concern of neighbors from time to time. The dumpster is left at or actually on the sidewalk prior to pick up. There is a long metal bar that sticks out, and presents a safety hazard, particularly in the darkness.

The ANC has asked Dave Erlandson to follow up on this issue: to keep the dumpster off the sidewalk, and preferably away from the pedestrian way altogether.

Tree to be Planted in Memory of JoAnn Hoffman

The ANC will plant a tree in memory of JoAnn, Chairman of the ANC at the time of her death last April. The tree will be planted on Sacramento Field in late May. There will be a ceremony in her honor in early June. Look for details in the June Whistler, or call Terry DeLancy at 349-6287.

Housing Issues

New Housing Committee Will Meet May 7

The first meeting of the Housing Committee was held on March 25. ANC Chairperson, Janet Rustow, chaired the meeting where the City’s acquisition of affordable housing from Harvard was discussed. Current tenants have many concerns regarding their tenancy, and many questions were answered by Roger Herzog, Housing Director from the City of Cambridge Community Development Department and Peter Daily from Home Owners Rehab.

The housing will be available to new tenants whose incomes are from 50%-100% of the federal median income. Current tenants who would like to stay, but have incomes

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higher than the guidelines, will see their rents gradually raised to market rates. They will not be asked to leave, and all current leases will be honored.

Winn Management will manage the property that will be owned by Home Owners Rehab, a non-profit. The City will provide names of tenants seeking affordable housing, and Winn Management will handle the placement using City of Cambridge guidelines.

Steve Meecham from the Campaign to Save 2000 Homes joined the meeting to let residents know what they can do on the wider level.

He explained how affordable housing could be financed. A transfer tax of 1% on all real estate transactions if approved by the state will help to fund affordable housing. The campaign is urging the City to come up with additional funds from an anticipated tax windfall due to rental increases, and savings from elimination of the rent control board.

Steve said there will be three additional case workers added to the Cambridge Department of Human Services to help individuals through the difficulties of relocating or threat of eviction.

Some ideas for agenda items of future meetings included an opportunity to share information, updates on the Harvard transfer of affordable housing, guest speakers that might include Tim Toomey or other City Councillors, Lesley’s role in affordable housing.

Call the council and ask to be placed on the Housing Committee mailing list to receive future information. Everyone is welcome to attend the next scheduled meeting on May 7 at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Agassiz School, 28 Sacramento St. entrance.

Traffic and Transportation

MBTA Improves Service to Harvard and Porter

In a letter from City Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair of the City Council Traffic and Transportation Committee, the ANC has learned that the MBTA has made an effort to respond to citizen complaints about the quality of service in Cambridge.

Several principal actions are listed below:

- MBTA Community Outreach: The MBTA has agreed to organize an Open House in Cambridge City Hall to give citizens the opportunity to voice concerns directly to the MBTA. (Complaints can always be made by calling 222-5215.)
- Porter Square Escalator Rehabilitation: These escalators are undergoing a major overhaul that should improve their overall reliability. This renovation will continue through the spring.
- Improvements at Harvard Square: Drainage has been cleared out, the bus schedule stand will be refilled daily, and visitor passes will be sold above ground in the Cambridge Discovery booth. Issues of cleanliness and ventilation will be followed up by the City with the organization of a “walk through” to provide the MBTA with immediate feedback from community representatives.
- Installation of Standard Bus Stop Signs: Cambridge will receive the bus signs used elsewhere in the MBTA service region.
- Improvement in Snow Clearance: Snow clearance was one of the most important issues raised. The City has clarified responsibility for snow clearance in the Porter Square area on MBTA property.
- Improvements in Monitoring: The MBTA will advise the City of its schedule of inspectors, so the City can identify areas of concern.
- Status of Handicapped and Disabled Access Features: Kneeling busses and wheelchair lifts should be operational at all times. Citizens should report any malfunction to the MBTA. The kneeling feature can be lowered for any citizen, not just handicapped or disabled citizens.

Crime Watch

How Can We Fight Graffiti?

Graffiti is a city-wide issue that affects public, private and institutional property owners. Both graffiti prevention and removal are time consuming, expensive and require continuous intervention.

You can help:

- Use the Graffiti Hotline to report addresses of vandalized sites: 349-INFO. You can also get information on how to remove graffiti and other resources on graffiti elimination.
- Organize community clean up days.
- Remove graffiti promptly from your property.
- Educate your children about the cost and impact of graffiti.

❖ City Wide ❖

Porter Square

The regular meeting of the Porter Square Neighbors Association will be held on the Third Thursday, May 15th from 7-9 p.m. at the Metropolitan Baptist Church, corner of Beech and Orchard Streets.

Harvard Square

Historic District Continues Meeting

There will be a special meeting on Monday May 5th at 5:30 p.m. to discuss the proposed historic district for Harvard Square. The discussion will begin with a presentation by Wayne Feiden, director of the Northampton Planning Department.

Tentative meetings are also planned for May 14 and May 28. Call the Cambridge Historical Commission at 349-4683 to be included in the mailing list for these meetings.
Agassiz Community
School Programs

Agassiz Afterschool

Registration for next year's Agassiz Afterschool has started for incoming kindergartners. Initial school assignments have been made and families of students new to the system are exploring after school options. The Agassiz Afterschool provides after school care to children attending any of the Cambridge Public Schools, grades kindergarten through five. Please call us if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance in any way. To schedule a tour of the Agassiz Afterschool kindergarten program, please call Dawn Greene at 349-6287 between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Registration for the 1997-1998 school year for children currently enrolled in the Agassiz Afterschool will take place in June. Parents will be informed by mail regarding the registration procedure.

Please drop by our Open House on Thursday, June 5th from 4:45 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to see the great things that are happening at the Afterschool. Exhibits of work and performances in various disciplines will showcase some of the special activities that make up an Afterschool day.

Outback Summer Camp

Registration for Outback, the summer camp of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council, is in full swing for the upcoming summer. Camp this year starts the week of June 30th and continues through the week of August 18th. Openings in all eight weeks remain as of this writing, but please try to get your registration forms in early as spaces go fast. Children entering first through sixth grades are eligible to attend. If you would like to receive a brochure or more information, please call 349-6287.

Outback Counselor in Training Program

The Counselor in Training Program at Outback, for youth entering the seventh through ninth grades, provides training and experience in counselor skills. Applications for Outback C.I.T. positions have been received and interviews with candidates have been scheduled. C.I.T.'s are a very important part of the Outback experience for campers and help to make the camp as special as it is.

Please let us know if you have any ideas for next fall regarding middle school or adult programs. We would like to increase our programming options, but need your help. So ask your pre-teens and your friends, and help us come up with some new ideas.

If you would like to see any of our teen or adult programs in action (but don't quite want to participate), please stop by the Agassiz School any Tuesday or Wednesday evening and have a look. Certainly if you have any questions, please call the office at 349-6287.

Girl Scouting Begins

A new Girl Scout troop will be forming this spring for girls in grades kindergarten through six. Meetings will be held on Mondays from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Community Room at North Hall. For more information, please call Lisa Sjostrom at 497-2264.

Computer Class

Thanks to the efforts of Nancy Rial, librarian at the Agassiz School, and the sponsorship of the Cambridge Partnership, the Agassiz community has enjoyed the benefit of a series of computer classes led by Ms. Rial and Todd Bailey, a student at M.I.T. The classes are held at the Agassiz School and are open to the public at no charge. Participants, however, must pre-register if they would like to attend. Next class will focus on the Internet and it will be held in May. For more information call Nancy Rial at 349-4400 or Jody Garber at 349-6287.

Holocaust Commemoration May 8

The City of Cambridge presents "Keeping the Light Alive" on May 8 from 7-9 p.m. at Temple Beth Shalom, 8 Tremont St., a ceremony that includes music, remembrance, candle lighting, singing, testimony, and words from survivors. Guests will include Cambridge clergy and Harvey Cox.

On Sunday, May 18 from 2:30-5 p.m. a community forum will be held at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second St. It will explore the widespread ingesting of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany and comparisons with U.S. racism. It will include a panel and discussion. For more information call The Cambridge Peace Commission at 349-4694.
Agassiz Public School

HMFH Architects Honored

The award ceremony to present George Metzger and HMFH Architects with two awards for the Agassiz School building was rescheduled from April 1 to April 14.

HMFH was the recipient of the 1997 Walter Taylor Award of the American Association of School Administrators and the 1997 Learning by Design Grand Prize of the American School Board Journal.

In connection with the prize, HMFH presented a $1,000 scholarship to the Agassiz School.

Dignitaries included Senate President Thomas Birmingham, Superintendent Mary Lou McGrath, Mayor Sheila Russell, and School Committee Woman Susana Segal. In attendance were Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi, City Councillors Henrietta Davis and Kathy Born, and School Committee Woman Alice Turkel.

The ceremony was for children and adults alike, and it featured a violin solo by Agassiz alumna Yako Miranda accompanied by CRLS music teacher Bob Ponti. There were various presentations by students, including a huge “blue ribbon” which George wore during the ceremony. He thanked various individuals, members of the school and Agassiz communities for working toward the creation of a prize winning school.

Announcements

RETIREMENT SEMINARS

The Peabody Community School is sponsoring a three-evening seminar on “Financial Strategies for a Successful Retirement” on May 8, 15, 22 from 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the Peabody Community School, 44 Linnaean St. The course is designed to prepare participants for a financially secure retirement. Cost is $50 per couple, $40 single, and $30 for seniors over the age of 65. For more information, call Mary Ellen Breen, Director of the Community School Programs at 349-6267.

CAMBRIDGE EVENTS CALENDAR

The Cambridge Department of Tourism has developed a “Calendar of Events” that lists various Cambridge events of interest to tourists or anyone who is looking for something to do in Cambridge. The colorfully produced calendar is available at the Visitor Information Booth in Harvard Square or call the Office for Tourism at 441-2884

Parents Fight Harvard Law School’s Plans to Close Center

Parents of young children and their supporters from throughout the Harvard community have organized to oppose Harvard Law School’s decision to close the child care center it has supported for the past 25 years.

On March 14, the center director was informed by Harvard law School Administrative Dean, Sandra Coleman, that the Law School was terminating its sponsorship of the child care program at the end of August and that the center would have to vacate the space it has occupied across from the Law School campus at 23 Everett St. The Dean maintained that it was necessary to terminate support for the child care program in order to make space available for other Harvard student groups and faculty members currently housed in other Harvard facilities.

Parents were outraged at this action, and quickly mobilized supporters among Harvard Law School faculty and alumni in opposition to the Dean Coleman’s decision. The Dean subsequently granted an extension through June 1998, but would offer no alternative space or sponsorship that would guarantee the existence of this center.

Parents and staff of the program have now launched a petition drive among current Law School faculty, staff and students aimed at helping convince Harvard Law School Dean Robert C. Clark to reverse the decision to evict the center.

The Harvard Law School Child Care Center was established in 1971, and is one of six centers receiving direct financial support from Harvard. It provides childcare to Harvard affiliated families and also to community members when space is available.

Anyone wishing to add support may contact Dean Robert C. Clark at Griswold, 200, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA 02138 or call 495-4601.

DIVERSITY FORUMS

The City of Cambridge presents the fourth forum in the series entitled “The Changing Faces of Cambridge: Race Class and Institutions” It will be held on Thursday May 8th from 7-9 p.m. in the Central Square Library located at 45 Pearl Street. This forum, “Wealth and Poverty in the Age of High Tech” will begin with a slide presentation by Charles Sullivan of the Cambridge Historical Commission, followed by a perspective by Charles Hayden, historian and educator. A panel will speak on their experiences. Discussion will follow. For more information call Mary Leno at 349-4697.
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| May 2, Friday        | 4-7 p.m. | Reception E. Ann Baldwin "Rear View Mirror"  
Sacramento Street Gallery, Agassiz Community Center  
20 Sacramento St. Cambridge |
| May 3 & 4, Saturday & Sunday | 1-5 p.m. | Miller Street Studio Open House - 11 Miller St.  
(Off Sacramento, parallel to Beacon, next to Star Market)  
Artists, artisans and musicians open their studios |
| May 7, Wednesday     | 7:00 p.m. | Agassiz Housing Committee Meeting - Community Room  
Agassiz School, 28 Sacramento St. Entrance |
| May 8, Thursday      | 2:00 p.m. | Angkor Cambodian Dance Performance  
Agassiz School Stage, 28 Sacramento St. Entrance  
Admission $1.00 Folk dances performed by children |
| May 11, Sunday       |       | Mother’s Day                                                                              |
| May 20, Tuesday      | 7:30 p.m. | Agassiz Neighborhood Council ANNUAL MEETING  
Agassiz School Dining Hall, 28 Sacramento St. Entrance  
Elections and Reception to meet the ANC Board & guests  
Everyone is welcome to attend and meet the Board. |
| May 26, Monday       |       | Memorial Day - Public Schools Closed                                                    |