Notes from the 9/12 Council Meeting
Regarding the Future of the Agassiz School Building

There were more than 150 people in Agassiz School's Baldwin Hall for the first meeting of the neighborhood council. They came to voice their opinion of the proposal to rebuild the Agassiz School. During the last week in August and until the meeting, a model of the proposed building was on display in the community center at 20 Sacramento St., and a report from the 21st Century Committee (the committee which hired the architects and developed the school plan) was mailed to residents. The report was also published in the September Whistler.

The model was built and the plan was written in response to the residents request at a sparsely attended meeting held on June 26, when the plan was originally presented. Those in attendance believed this would make the plan more widely known and clearly understood in the community. It was agreed that the first fall neighborhood council meeting would allow people to respond to the model and plan.

Just after Labor Day, a comprehensive opposition flyer was distributed throughout the neighborhood. Residents signed petitions to stop the plan as stated in the report, and a further petition to save the Agassiz School Building as a historic landmark was sent to the Cambridge Historical Commission.

At the meeting, Phil Brown, Chairman of the 21st Century Committee, presented the plan to rebuild the Agassiz School. The plan called for demolition of the existing school, and a new building that could house two grades each from Kindergarten to 8th Grade, including a full size gym, art and music rooms, special needs classrooms, and community space. This expansion would create room for approximately 120 more students. Brown stressed the painful need for more space, as well as better planned space for current educational needs. In a city wide school needs assessment the Agassiz School was found to have outlived its usefulness. The architects, HMFH, represented by George Metzger, felt that the cozy atmosphere of Agassiz, considered so important to parents, could be retained in the building as planned.

City officials made it clear that any expenses of rebuilding must be funded with help of the State School Building Assistance Bureau. The Agassiz project qualifies for 90% reimbursement if accepted. State regulations do not permit renovations that are more costly than new construction, and the architects felt that renovations would probably exceed the cost of new construction. The state felt that a building of the size proposed must have direct access to the play area and recommended that Sacramento St. be closed to accommodate this need.

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, said that he had received the petition to save the Agassiz School Building and that his commission had decided to review the school to see if it could be granted landmark status. Due to the architecture and history of the building, planned by Maria Louise Baldwin, first female African American principal and teacher of e.e.cummings, it could qualify for the National Register of Historic Places. The first
The possible date for a hearing is in December.

John Hermanson, who organized the opposition to the proposed plan, said that the building was just too big for the site. The lack of setbacks and height would make the building out of scale with the neighborhood. He cited a school needs assessment from last fall in which parents stated that they chose Agassiz first for its teachers and second for its size. He had over 300 signatures on petitions to stop the proposed plans.

After the speakers, the neighborhood residents presented their views. Demolition of the building was opposed by some. Concern was expressed over closing Sacramento St. at Oxford St. and the resulting loss of parking, as well as one more Agassiz street lost to an institution. Others opposed the expanded size of the proposed building, lack of setbacks on the property, and increased student population. New demands on the tot lot could curtail use by preschoolers and adults.

While there was enormous opposition, there was also an undercurrent of understanding. The 21st Century Committee had worked hard to solve the pressing needs of the school community. The neighborhood understood the need to work together, address the concerns of the residents and meet the needs of the school.

The community agreed to have a follow up meeting as soon as it could be organized, form a small group to meet with the 21st Century Committee, and work toward solutions. [See article on follow up meeting held 9/19.]

The group attempted to list all points of neighborhood concern: overall size of proposed building, lack of setbacks, closing of Sacramento St. at Oxford, demolition of an historical building, increased student body, increased use of tot lot and Sacramento Field, and loss of trees in front of school. A vote was taken on the various issues so the representatives from that meeting would have some concrete data to bring to the 21st Century Committee of the Agassiz School. A consensus was reached on two issues: 1) The present plans call for a building that is too big for the site, and 2) Sacramento Street should not be closed.

It was agreed to name three representatives and one alternate from the community who would be willing to attend up to one meeting each week for the next month in order to keep the timetable established by the 21st Century Committee. These representatives will report back to the larger community after each meeting. Representatives were chosen from a hat, and they are: Susan Sills, Camilla Wankaner, John Hermanson and Fred Levy.

Reports and information from all meetings will be published in The Whistler. Everyone who attended 21st Century meetings or the council meeting of 9/12 is automatically on the mailing list, and will receive notice of meetings. If you would like to be added to this list, call the council at 349-6287.

Community Follow up on Agassiz School

After the Agassiz Neighborhood Council meeting of 9/12, a follow up meeting was held on 9/19 attended by approximately 40 people. Its purpose was to organize a community response to the 21st Century Committee, and choose several representatives of the community to meet with them and speak for the community.

The first comment of the evening acknowledged the work of the 21st Century Committee, and set the tone for the meeting which was one of joining the process to improve the Agassiz School.

Kate Conway Appointed Acting Principal

Permanent Principal Hiring Underway

Katherine Cox, principal of the Agassiz School for 20 years, retired in June. The process to hire a principal to begin this Fall fell apart in the summer, and an acting principal, Kate Conway, was appointed. She is a dedicated and enthusiastic administrator, and the school was delighted with her ability to have Agassiz open smoothly just one week after she was appointed.

The process to hire a permanent principal was reopened in September. The position has been posted and advertised, and resumes have been received. The process requires a community resume screening committee and a community interview committee, both chosen by lottery and composed of parents and teachers with minority requirements in both categories. These committees are currently at work.

The resume screening committee recommends candidates to the interview committee. There are final interviews held by the Superintendent of Schools. Cambridge teachers who meet the qualifications for principal, and candidates the superintendent may recommend are interviewed, as well as those screened by the resume committee.

The Superintendent of Schools, Mary Lou McGrath, will choose the candidate and her choice will be made public at the appropriate School Committee Meeting, possibly in October.
Mt. Vernon St. Update

Neighborhood Nine Association and several members of the Agassiz community have been negotiating with the owner of a parcel of land on Mt. Vernon St., formerly owned by CDIA, developer of Porter Exchange. This property is adjacent to the parking lot across from Porter Exchange. Town houses are being constructed on that site. There is a hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals set for early October. For more information contact Kathleen Born, Chairman, Neighborhood Nine Association at 497-4123.

The Howl - Newsletter for Howland St.

There is a new newsletter in the neighborhood, The Howl, an Occasional Newsletter for Residents of Howland St. and Environs. An editorial statement of the first edition, September 1991, states:

This new rag is presented tentatively, as an experiment. Its creators are not even sure it's a good idea. But it flows from our conviction that strong and open neighborhoods offer many values to urban residents.

The most obvious, perhaps, it that strong neighborhood bonds offer one of the few effective protections against crime. On a more subtle level, however, some of us believe that our own lives are expanded by friendship and an association with neighbors...

This publication, entirely unofficial and informal, is intended solely for the information (and entertainment, if possible) of local residents. We welcome editorial contributions from neighbors and well as personal news and letters. Editor: Richard Griffin. Please address all correspondence to 7 Howland St. Cambridge, MA 02138.

Are there any other street or area newsletters out there? Or maybe some just waiting to be born?

Quality Inn - What Happened?

You may remember the long series of meetings Harvard and the community attended last Spring. The purpose was to find a suitable agreement before a special permit was issued to convert the Quality Inn into a Harvard Law School dormitory. Now it is known as North Hall, the residents are moved in, but there is no progress on the landscaping, painting, fencing or other amenities. Since nothing has been heard from Harvard Law School, we have requested a meeting to get an update on the status of the renovation.

Newport Road Parking

Several years ago town houses were built on a Frost St. parking lot used by residents of Newport Road. The parking was moved underground, and in that agreement, three surface parking spaces were specified. Since that time, one of these spaces has been removed, and according to Cambridge Inspectional Services, that should not have been done without a variance. We have invited the owner to the next Agassiz Neighborhood Council meeting. This topic will be taken up during general business, and if you are interested, please attend on October 15th, 20 Sacramento St. at 7:30 P.M.

Agassiz School Fair

The Annual Agassiz Fair will take place on Saturday, October 26. This fair is the major fund raiser for the Agassiz School, and includes games and raffles, food and entertainment. Details are not firm as the Whistler goes to press, so for more information, contact the school at 349-6525.

Plant a Street Tree for Cambridge

Each year the Committee on Public Planting sponsors The Client Tree Purchase Program which begins its eleventh year of providing shade trees for Cambridge. You may pick a species of tree and order it for your sidewalk, and the city will plant it. The City Arborist, Jack Kelly, will be available to consult or answer questions. He will make the initial site review and proper species recommendation. The DPW will oversee the planting of your tree in early spring.

Trees cost $140 each, and the deadline for deposits is October 31, 1991. For an application call 349-4800.

Each year the Agassiz Neighborhood Council purchases a tree and places it on a site that is in need of a tree. You can recommend a site for the council to consider, but please remember that the arborist has the final say on species and placement.

Register to Vote November 5th

There will be an election for Cambridge City Council and School Committee on Tuesday November 5th. Be sure to register and vote.

Ward 7 Precinct 1 and 2 vote at the North Prospect Church, 1803 Massachusetts Ave.

You may register at the Election Commission office between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. weekdays until October 12. You may register even if you are a student or new in town but you must claim Cambridge residence.

If you have any questions about voting or registering call the Election Commission at 349-4361.
Agassiz to Host Playwrights Platform
Sunday Readings to be held in Community Center.

On Sunday, October 6th the Agassiz Community Center, 20 Sacramento St. will host the Playwrights Platform in the first of a series of semi-staged readings of new plays and works-in-progress by playwrights from the New England area.

At 7:30 P.M. on October 6th, there will be a Get-Acquainted Reception for the community in appreciation of our new hosts. Following the light refreshments, two one-act plays will be presented: "A Writing Rose" by Mary Olympia and "Tanks for the Memory" (sic) by John O'Brien.

After each reading, the audience is cordially invited to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the play in a forum which is moderated to assure that the discussion is constructive and that all time is evenly apportioned. Most readings and subsequent discussions are over by 10 P.M.

Readings are not held on the last Sunday of each month. Anyone with questions about the readings or Playwrights Platform should call Carol Hantman at 354-5110. The Platform looks forward to performing in the Agassiz community and hopes that anyone interested in live theater will attend. All readings are free and open to the public.

Readings for the rest of October include:

"The Playwright" by Daryl Janes October 13
"Market Values" by Elmer Engstrom October 20

Sacramento St. Gallery Opens Fall Season
"Earthly delights: Objects from the Urban Landscape"

Abby Nelson, neighborhood artist, will open the 1991-92 Season of the Sacramento St. Gallery located in the Agassiz Community Center at 20 Sacramento St. with her new show, "Earthly Delights: Objects from the Urban Landscape". The show will mix photography and sculpture and will run from October 1-19th. An opening will be held on Saturday October 5th from 3-5 P.M.

The gallery will be open Thursdays from Noon to 8 P.M., Saturdays and Sundays from Noon until 5 P.M. Other times may be arranged by appointment. For more information call 349-6287.

There are several shows scheduled this Fall, including a show from the Ethnic Foundation in October, a show of children's illustrations in late November, and our annual Crafts Sale and Exhibit in December.

AAP Celebrates 5th Season
The Agassiz Afterschool Players, to celebrate their 5th Season, have created a new logo.

Yoga
Danielle Levi Alves will be offering Kripalu Yoga classes (The Yoga Experience) and yoga therapy (The Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy) for people of all ages and conditions. Classes began the week of September 16, so for information on registration and fees call Danielle at 354-2113. Classes are held at the Kripalu Yoga Studio, 25 Carver St., Cambridge.

The schedule is as follows:
The Yoga Experience Monday: 6-7:15 P.M. Beginners/7:30-8:45 P.M. Intermediate; Tuesday: 12:30-1:45 P.M. and 6-7:15 P.M.; Thursday 8:30-9:45 A.M. and 6-7:15 P.M.
The Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy Wednesday 6-8 P.M. and Friday 12-2 P.M.

Whistler Mailing
Due to the wide community interest in the plans to rebuild or renovate the Agassiz School, we have added various school and community mailing lists to our own. If you receive more than one Whistler in the mail please let us know at 349-6287.
Cambridge YWCA
The Cambridge YWCA located at 7 Temple St. Central Square has planned an interesting variety of classes open to the public including Afro-ics, Lunchtime and After Work Exercise and Health classes, Befriending Your Body, Creative Dance for Preschoolers, and Women and Nutrition. For more information on these classes call 491-6050.

Conference on Women in March
The New England Regional conference on Women will be held on Saturday March 28 1991 at Tufts University. The planning committee for this event has sent the neighborhood council a CALL To ACTION, and they are looking for activist women who would like to participate as presenters. They are striving for diverse panels on issues from single mothers to capitalism to women and AIDS to violence to racism.

If you are interested in this event, contact Peggy Barrett, Director, Tufts University, Office of Women's Programs, 55 Talbot Avenue, Medford, MA 02155, telephone 627-3184 or 381-3184. Proposals must be received by November 1.

For Sale
Two Chatham Love Seats 60"wx27"lx34"D Stripe pattern beige and off white. Two bar chairs natural wood (light)with rush seats. 25" high. Call Andrea 492-0248.

Dormitory Opens at 10 Sacramento St.
The Agassiz Neighborhood Council has contacted Pat Byrne at Lesley College to plan a date for residents and staff of Threshold to meet with neighbors and get to know them. Threshold is a program of Lesley College which serves learning disabled young adults., and they have recently renovated 10 Sacramento St. for use as a dorm and student lounge.

Classes at Porter Exchange
This excerpt was taken from the September edition of the Lesley News:

The College is pleased to announce the completion of 15,000 square feet of newly created classroom space, located on the third floor at Porter Exchange, a ten-minute walk from campus in Porter Square. The 10 classrooms, 4 seminar rooms, 2 Reading Recovery laboratories, 2 observation rooms, and a fully equipped audio/visual room, were readied for use this fall.

MONTROSE SPA
1646 Mass. Ave.
547-5053
The friendly store, one block from Harvard Law School
Open 7 days a week
7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

At our next council meeting Pat will let us know who will be living in the other recently renovated Lesley dormitory on Sacramento St., and she will give us a

New Police Commissioner Visits Agassiz
Join us at the October 15th Agassiz Neighborhood Council Meeting and welcome the newly appointed Cambridge Police Commissioner Perry Anderson.

We hope to learn about his new role in the police department, most notably his ideas on community involvement.

We will express our concerns about crime in this neighborhood, and try and find out how we can work with the police to make this a safer neighborhood.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 P.M. in the Agassiz Community Center, 20 Sacramento St. on Tuesday October 15th.

LESLEY COLLEGE NEWS

COUNCIL PROGRAMS

Community School Programs Registered
The Afterschool and Preschool programs have finished registration for the fall term. You may register late, but call the office to check on availability.

Anyone who is interested in neighborhood programs for children should call the office. We would be glad to send you brochures, answer your questions, or set up an appointment to visit the programs.

You may also ask to be on our mailing list for the Afterschool Activities Program Term 2 for grades K-8 beginning in January. There will be a mini course schedule for grades 5-8 between Thanksgiving and December Vacations.

Call 349-6287.

BEACON ST. LAUNDROMAT
358 Beacon Street
Somerville/Cambridge Line
864-8654
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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**October 1991**

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

DO NOT FORWARD