ANC Meeting Notes

June Council Meeting

There was light attendance at the June ANC meeting held June 21. Representatives from Lesley College attended including Steve Crawford, Director of Communication and Turner, Agassiz Liaison from the President's Office. They explained their bid to purchase the Porter Exchange building on Mass. Ave., at the corner of Roseland. Due to the bankruptcy of the owner, and the collapse of the bank that held the mortgage, the RTC (Resolution Trust Corporation), a government agency, held the mortgage. They were currently in negotiations with the RTC to purchase the property, and expected to acquire it in late summer if all went well. [The deal went through in August, and Lesley now owns the property.]

Lesley said they had no master plan, but since they already leased 19 classrooms in the building, they felt the purchase was an important opportunity for the College. They expressed a willingness to work with the neighborhood in planning use.

Although Lesley plans were sketchy, they did make a commitment to keep the retail space at the street level. Lesley was advised that the neighborhood, in its rezoning efforts, anticipated street level retail that opened up onto Mass. Ave. to avoid a mall effect.

Lesley said they would honor leases, but they would be reviewing them for the future.

In terms of the parking lot across the street, Lesley had no plans.

Lesley said they had spoken to the Mayor and City Council about the sale, and discussions would begin when the building was purchased regarding "in lieu of taxes" and other issues.

It was agreed that a small committee would be established to discuss the various issues, and abutting neighbors, including representation from Neighborhood 9, could be part of that group if Lesley became the owner.

Representatives from Agassiz construction including Clerk of the Works Lou DiNapoli and Bill DeBartolomeo met with the council to provide an update of what to look forward to during the summer. For the summer report, see page 5.

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

Neighborhood News

Tenants Organize To Defeat Proposition 9

A meeting, organized by one resident who felt it was time to act, was held on August 18 for Agassiz tenants who want to do something about keeping rent control in Cambridge. Proposition 9, which will abolish rent control if voted in, will be on the ballot in November. City Councillor Frank Duehay was the guest, and he informed a crowd of 150 people, including 30 senior citizens, that Proposition 9 can only be defeated by ballot at the polls.

There was testimony from many Agassiz rent control tenants including parents with young children and homeowners. Tenants feared eviction and displacement if rent control were to be abolished.

In attendance were representatives from Cambridge Tenants Union and the Eviction Free Zone. Jeff Purcell represented Save Our (Continued page 2)

Information on Next Meeting
September 27 7:30

Agassiz School Construction Update

Lou DiNapoli, Clerk of the Works, and other construction representatives will provide an update on the New Agassiz School

Discussion of a Joint Agassiz/Neighborhood 9 Meeting

Neighborhood Nine is just across Mass. Ave. from Agassiz. The idea of planning a joint meeting to discuss mutual concerns will be discussed.

Discussion of Proposition 9 (Rent Control)

Proposition 9, which will end rent control, will be on the Massachusetts ballot in November. The ANC plans an open discussion of the issue and how it will affect Agassiz.
Communities Coalition, an umbrella group located in Boston fighting Proposition 9. This organization can be reached at 425-1169.

The call for a Steering Committee raised 98 volunteers, who will organize the group, which has been named the Agassiz Tenants Association.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room at 1651 Mass. Ave. on the corner of Wendell St. Elderly citizens who fear eviction are encouraged to attend.

NEIGHBORHOOD FLOODING ON AUGUST 18 AND 19

Again neighbors at the end of Sacramento, Wendell, Carver and Crescent Streets suffered with inches of water in basements and cars. Flooding was reported on Oxford Street, and Sacramento Place. The “water” is a mixture of rainwater and sewerage because the Agassiz neighborhood does not have sewer pipes separated from rain run off pipes. Streets smelled of sewerage for several days, and many neighbors called the ANC to see what could be done.

Anne Daughaday from the DPW encouraged all victims of flooding to install back flow valves. These valves have helped many people prevent flooding. She said we will have to wait for the sewer project to be completed for further relief.

There is a Sewer Separation project currently in progress, which will separate the lines and increase pipe size to the river. Construction is going on currently in Harvard Square.

The ANC will host a meeting with Dept. of Public Works officials and City representatives, but due to summer vacations, the council was unable to set a meeting date prior to the Whistler’s going to press. However, there will be a meeting to:

1. Review Agassiz flooding problems with City officials and see what else the City can do to help.
2. Hear a report on the progress of the Sewer Separation Project Phase VI including the time line.
3. Discuss other possible resources available to help the neighborhood cope with flooding.

Call the council at 349-6287, and we will advise you as soon as we have a meeting date. You will also be placed on our mailing list to receive information and notification of meetings on the flood and sewer issues. A record is kept with dates of floods and addresses effected by flooding, so please let us know if you experienced any flooding.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON GARFIELD STREET LOT

(Excerpts of Notes from 7/14 meeting)

Meeting of Thursday, 14 July, between Garfield Street residents and representatives of the Cambridge Housing Authority (Dan Wuenschel, Len Charney, Deepa Nihawan).

This meeting with the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) was arranged to discuss plans for the construction of affordable housing on the lot at the corner of Garfield Street and Mass Ave. Four major issues were discussed: The current status of the CHA’s plans for the site; how the neighborhood can be involved at each stage of the process; the nature of the grant for the project (restrictions, limitations, etc.); and security and maintenance.

STATUS OF PLANS

The lot is still owned by the MBTA, but the CHA expects to be in possession of the site by early Fall. The CHA intends to begin detailed planning in the late Summer/early Fall, in parallel to the process of purchasing the property. They hope to break ground next summer.

The neighborhood group agreed that we are not interested in obstructing the process, but rather are concerned about look and feel of neighborhood and density.

The group discussed the status of the property behind the abutters’ house at 16 Garfield Street. All other houses on Garfield Street have backyards, but this one does not; it was asked whether there is any possible way of allowing the abutters to acquire all or part of the parcel behind their house, which would preserve the feel of the neighborhood homes. Mr. Wuenschel said that the terms of the grant require that the property be for public use. However, when the call for bids goes out, the “Developers Kit” (which specifies the guidelines and requirements) could have a suggestion from the neighborhood that the land be used for something other than parking. There is no guarantee that this suggestion will be taken up, but at least it can be made. Mr. Wuenschel did assure the group that abutters would have access to their bulkhead.

NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT

This will be a “turnkey development,” which means that a single developer will be responsible for the entire process, from beginning to end (including design, construction, landscaping). The developer and architect form a team that bids together. The CHA first will engage in preliminary site planning, which will allow it to issue a “Developer’s Kit.” This kit
specifies rules and guidelines (the guidelines will be loose, whenever possible, to encourage creative designs). It will specify 5-8 units; this was the number of units that was discussed with the ANC approximately ten years ago. As noted above, the Developers Kit will be sensitive to neighbors' concerns; suggestions will be included regarding the use of the rear part of the site and preference that it be left open (devoid of parking and buildings), but these will not be requirements on the bidders.

Although the estimated cost is a major criterion, it is not the only one; other factors include whether the team has worked together before, design aesthetics, quality of the materials, and so on. It is possible that a small amount of City funding can be used to supplement the grant, should this be necessary. The neighborhood will be allowed to review the bids and make its preferences known, but the CHA noted that it is not obligated to accede to the desires of the neighborhood.

Mr. Wuenensch described three junctures at which the neighborhood can play a constructive role: Site planning, the Developer’s Kit, and the Design Phase. He said that they will let us know (via Terry DeLancey) when the site planning phase is beginning so that we can meet with them again to provide our input. In early September the CHA will organize a tour of their small developments for interested members of the neighborhood.

**FUNDING**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is providing major funding for this project. HUD puts a limit on how much a given unit can cost. This HUD money comes from grants totaling 45 units city-wide. The CHA has funding remaining for about 15 three-bedroom units. This funding mechanism will encourage developers to produce plans for the maximal number of units they can fit on the site. The neighborhood representatives voiced concern about traffic and parking problems; the issue of number of units was left open, awaiting the specific proposals of the bidders.

**SECURITY AND MAINTENANCE**

The tenants would be selected from other developments, and only those who have a good history would be moved to these units. Applicants will be screened with a credit check, check of police records, and a home visit. The CHA is vigilant about responding to complaints, such as noise, security issues, maintenance, and so on. In addition, there is a "chain of command" within the CHA administration and in the event that neighbors do not receive a satisfactory hearing at CHA's various administrative levels, their concerns can be included on the agenda of the CHA Board, which meets publicly twice each month.

CHA has three full-time security people, and a 24-hour line where a manager can be reached if there is a security or maintenance problem. If necessary, repeat offenders can be evicted. Only about 3% of tenants city-wide are called in each year for a discussion of problems, and most stop the problem in response. The rate is probably lower for residents of smaller developments.

The CHA's concerns about maintenance lead them to use high-quality materials such as solid wood cabinets (not particle board), Corian tub surrounds, and so forth. They are building for the "long haul."

The meeting ended on a positive note. Members of the neighborhood who are interested in becoming involved in this process are encouraged to contact Terry DeLancey at 349-6287.

**Mass. Ave. Changes**

The *Acropolia*, a Greek restaurant that has been on the Avenue a long time, has been sold to a minor partner from Harvard Square's Casablanca.

The new restaurant will be a Mediterranean style bistro that will open onto the street. It will be a completely non-smoking, with 7 standing spaces, 12 bar seats and 66 restaurant seats.

*Reddog*, known for antique clothing and antiques, has closed, and *Irish Imports* is scheduled to move into that site from its smaller site next door. From Here to Maternity will be replaced by *Matisse*, a new store featuring fun clothing, jewelry, gifts and art. Downstairs you will find *Deborah Mann* and Co. featuring comfortable clothing for women.

**Traffic**

Lauren Preston from the Traffic and Parking Department has advised us that the committee called for by Frank Duehay to study traffic flow and pedestrian safety in Porter Square, has met. It is known as the *Porter Square Pedestrianization Project*, and Agassiz representatives are David Valenstein and Bonnie Solomon. They are scheduled to meet again in September.

**Crime and Safety**

COP is Introduced

Last spring The Agassiz Neighborhood Council was invited to a meeting to learn more about a new initiative taken by the Cambridge Police called Community Oriented Policing. They provided their definition of COP:

Community Policing is a new philosophy of policing, based on the concept that police officers and private citizens working together in creative ways can help solve contemporary community problems related to crime, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and neighborhood decay. The philosophy is predicated on the belief that achieving these goals requires that police departments develop a new relationship with the law-abiding people in the community, allowing them a greater voice in setting local priorities, and involving them in efforts to improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhoods. It shifts the focus of police work from handling random calls to solving problems.
We learned that 85% of calls to 911 are not related to law enforcement, but concern a variety of other issues. While police will continue to answer all calls, they will take the extra time to consider the situation. Police will become more adept at referring people to the appropriate services when an underlying social problem is the root of the call to police. The police will help to facilitate solutions instead of simply treating symptoms. The police would like to turn to the human service agencies in Cambridge to help solve those problems. A second meeting was held in August to develop the Leadership Council. The ANC has become part of the Leadership Council, which is a broad-based group of people representing city departments, social service organizations and non-profits in all Cambridge neighborhoods. This group will help define neighborhood needs, prioritize needs, and help facilitate solutions.

For more information on this program, call the council at 349-6287.

132 Oxford Street Tenants and Neighbors Meet
Crime, garbage, late night noise and lack of repairs were the complaints that prompted a meeting held late August to seek solutions for tenants and abutters at 132 Oxford St.
The ANC invited Cambridge Housing Authority and police representatives to meet with frustrated neighbors to seek solutions. Look for a full report on that meeting in the October Whistler, or call the ANC at 349-6287 for more information.

CCTV Wins Award
Susan Fleishman, Executive Director at Cambridge Community Television, has announced that on July 21 they won first place for Overall Excellence in the Public Access Programming category of the Hometown Video Festival. The festival was sponsored by the Alliance for Community Media, the oldest and largest festival for programming on access and local origination channels. There were 1,800 entries in 37 categories.
CCTV was selected based on the creativity, the innovation, and the diversity of their programming.
CCTV is a very interesting resource in Cambridge, with free video training to members (who must be Cambridge residents) and many unique opportunities for novice and expert alike. Give them a call at 225-2500 for more information.
UPDATE ON SUMMER CONSTRUCTION

While it has been hot and dirty around the construction site this summer, there have been relatively few complaints. Everyone has tried to make the best of the situation for the duration, and Lou DiNapoli, Clerk of the Works, has been available to help solve problems presented by the construction.

There was only one surprise this summer. In spite of the requisite testing prior to excavation, chlordane, an insecticide, was detected. This stopped construction until the extent of the contamination could be determined. It was found to be minimal, and the contaminated soil was then trucked to a different site from the non-contaminated soil.

Some Saturday work was done to make up for lost time. Concrete mats are now laid, and waterproofing is in. (The 15" of rain in the excavation on August 18 proved that the waterproofing works.) At this writing, preparation were being made to pour the foundation, then all the remaining dirt on the sides of the pilings will be removed.

In late August, the contractor requested that the end of Sacramento Street be closed off for three weeks, and Oxford Street between Sacramento and Wendell be closed off for another 3 weeks beginning September 26 to accommodate a large crane. An emergency meeting of the Oversight Committee was held on August 18 to discuss the proposed closings.

The meeting was attended by nine residents, Bill DeBartolomeo, Assistant Clerk of the Works for the City of Cambridge, and Steve Kirby, Project Manager for the Agassiz School from Eastern Construction. Janet Rostow chaired the meeting, and Steve Kirby explained that after the site had been reviewed, the contractor felt it was not possible for traffic to proceed around the crane due to its size, and the contractor requested the street closings from the city. Oxford would be blocked between Wendell and Sacramento, and traffic would be routed around. Sacramento St. would be blocked just beyond Sacramento Place (leaving access to it). There would be no through traffic to Oxford.

Attendees were strongly opposed to blocking Sacramento Street for any length of time. Concerns included resident access, difficulty routing school buses, safety, handicap access, possible loss of parking on one side of the street, tree damage and truck traffic. The consensus was that if the crane could be sited on Oxford Street for the entire period, it would be less inconvenient for the neighborhood. Steve Kirby said he would check to see if all the work could be done with the crane located at Oxford St. If Sacramento Street must be closed, residents agreed that it be kept to the absolute minimum time, possibly on weekends. Additional approvals must come from various other city departments including fire, public works, police, and traffic and parking to grant any street closing.

As the Whistler went to press, the use of Sacramento St. was still under discussion. Either way, another meeting will be scheduled between neighborhood representatives and the various city departments regarding the street closings. These discussions will ensure that traffic and services are rerouted in a way that will allow for the lowest inconvenience to the neighborhood and the highest safety of all residents. No date has been set, so call the council to be informed. (Everyone on the mailing list will be notified.) It was requested that these meetings be held at night to allow for maximum neighborhood participation.

For an up to date account of the issues, come to the ANC meeting on Tuesday, September 27 when there will be a full report.
Hot Line Continued

going on. Contractors said that no ticketing would be done when work was done for the day, and if people needed to make a fast stop, they could check with them for an O.K. Tickets would only be given if work was proceeding.
7/29 Contractor called to advise that crews would work Saturday 7/3.
8/8 Call voicing concern about tree almost dead across from site. Arborist will check. Tree will be replaced if necessary.

8/9, 8/10 Two calls regarding damage from construction. One involved cracking plaster and the other involved caulking falling away from steps. Clerk of Works provided ANC with the process for reporting damage: describe damage in writing and forward the letter to George Metzger, HMFH Architects, 130 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge MA 02139.
8/10 Call regarding Pot Hole directly in front of Agassiz School construction on Oxford St. Called DPW to fix.

Sacramento Field Update

George Metzger, architect for the Agassiz School, has updated us on the construction of the field. The contract will be awarded by the end of August, and construction will begin in September. It should be substantially completed by December 1, and this will include the underground work and fencing. If playground equipment is not available by then, it will be installed in the spring.

They expect to sod the field which will be closed to activities until school opens in fall of '95 to allow the grass to take hold.

Cultural Happenings

The Sacramento Street Gallery will remain closed until fall '95 due to Agassiz School Construction. It is temporarily in use as a program and meeting space.

Gallery 57

This gallery, located at 57 Inman Street in the lobby of the Cambridge Arts Council, currently has a Preview of its 1994-1995 Exhibition Series through September 15. Artists represented are: MICHAEL COMPTON * REBECCA DOUGHTY * HANS EVERS * LINDA HAAS * KAREN LARSEN * LISA LESNIAK * DEBORAH L. PUTNOI * MARY VIOLETTE.

There will be a reception September 2 from 5-7 p.m. For information on the upcoming shows, call the Arts Council at 349-4380. Regular gallery hours are 8:30-5 weekdays.

Cambridge River Festival September 10

The Cambridge Arts Council presents their annual Cambridge River Festival on Saturday September 10 on the banks of the Charles beginning at Noon. There will be music, dance, crafts, and food. For more information call Matt Jenson at 349-4380.

October will be Massachusetts Culture Month.
For more information call the Massachusetts Cultural Council at 727-3668.

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About The ANC . . .

The Agassiz Neighborhood Council has been here in some institutional form since the early 1970's. It is now a private, non profit corporation contracted by the City of Cambridge to provide services and programs in the Agassiz neighborhood. All residents of the Agassiz neighborhood are members of the Council, and to be a voting member you must have signed into one Council meeting in the past 12 months.

Each month the ANC hosts a neighborhood meeting which is open to all interested people. (Board meetings are held prior to the council meetings, and the public is welcome.) The agenda is found on the front of this newsletter each month. New business is always welcome.

You don't have to wait for a meeting. Neighbors are encouraged to call Terry DeLancey in the Council office at 349-6287 any time. The Council can also refer you to City departments and other Cambridge agencies that might help you solve a problem or deal with an issue.
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Please send your tax deductible donations to the Agassiz Neighborhood Council, 20 Sacramento Street, Cambridge 02138

**Community School News**

**Parent Representative**

The Agassiz Neighborhood Council is delighted to announce that Joan Squieri has been added as Parent Representative to the ANC Board of Directors. She is the mother of two children in the full time Agassiz Afterschool Childcare Program. Regina is in grade three and Nate is in grade two at the Agassiz School. She is a resident of the Riverside neighborhood of Cambridge and works in the President's Office at Boston University. Joan has demonstrated a high level of commitment to our Community School Program and this past year served on the Parent Steering Committee.

**Sacramento Street Preschool**

Located at 20 Sacramento Street  
for children 2 years nine months to four years  
Open Monday-Friday morning  
on the Cambridge School calendar.  
Now has part time openings  
For information call Jody at 349-6287.

**Matisse**

For Fine Impressions.

-New store featuring fun clothing, jewelry, gifts and art.  
2% of all full price purchases go to good causes.

1691 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138  
617.376.7750

**Afterschool Programs Fall Registration**

Spaces are limited so register as soon as possible. The Afterschool Childcare Program accepts students in grades K-5 five days per week after school. Activities-Part time accepts children in grades K-5 or one, two or three days after school. The 6-8th Grade Activities are available and organized separately.

Registration will be held on September 8-9 at 20 Sacramento Street between 3-5 p.m.

For more information call 349-6287 or stop by 20 Sacramento Street for a brochure.
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<td>September 5 Monday</td>
<td>Labor Day/Rosh Hashanah begins at Sundown</td>
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<td>September 8, Thursday</td>
<td>First Day Cambridge Public Schools</td>
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<td>September 8, Thursday</td>
<td>Agassiz Tenants Association</td>
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<td>Community Room, 1651 Mass. Ave. at Wendell</td>
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<td>September 10, Saturday</td>
<td>Walk a Thon Benefit National Federation of the Blind</td>
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<td>at Fresh Pond (Call 348-3377 for Information)</td>
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<td>September 10 Saturday</td>
<td>Cambridge River Festival on the banks of the Charles</td>
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<td>September 12, Monday</td>
<td>First Day-Agassiz Afterschool and Preschool Programs</td>
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<td>September 14 Wednesday</td>
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<td>September 18 Sunday</td>
<td>Central Square World's Fair</td>
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<td>September 27, Tuesday</td>
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<td>ANC Council Meeting (See page one for agenda)</td>
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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.

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