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# Cambridge Civic Journal

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## THE LONG MARCH ISSUE

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### 0) Foreword

Civic participation has become a way of life for me over the last twelve years and has served as a kind of free education about government and society. In recent weeks I have been having second thoughts due to all the rancor associated with the Holmes project in Central Square. In all my time in Cambridge, I have not come across a more vicious, mean-spirited group of people than the gang that calls itself Save Central Square.

There are some in Cambridge who have a distorted view of what democracy is all about. I watched last summer as propagandists from SCS, unencumbered by employment, galloped out from Central Square yelling that "the yuppies are coming", that a building 15 stories tall was about to be built, that everyone's rent would rise because of the Holmes project, that it would cause traffic to become unbearable, that The Gap and malls and chain stores were coming in, that all commercial tenants would be thrown out permanently, that former Gov. William Weld was behind it, and that people like me who didn't buy the propaganda did not live in Cambridge. When you lie to people and threaten them and attribute rising housing costs to a single project, and if you have unlimited time on your hands, it is no surprise that you can gather several thousand signatures. If I believed what was being said, I would have signed their petition. Fortunately I knew better. I also know what democracy isn't.

Cambridge has a serious problem of authenticity. Every week I hear individuals claiming to speak for entire neighborhoods with nothing to back up their claims. Neighborhood associations with ancient membership lists and no discernible outreach will meet and make declarations about what other people supposedly believe. They will gleefully blend their own personal agendas with their associations and claim authenticity. I propose that all public meetings there should be a prohibition against anyone claiming to represent neighborhoods unless they can provide objective substantiation of that claim. Individuals will be free to speak their mind, representatives from organizations can speak for their members, but we should have no more advocating without representation.

### 1) Mar 16 City Council Meeting

The Holmes project in Central Square, workforce development, pay phones, reconstruction of the water works, and Polaroid. I'm tempted to just leave it at that, but duty calls.

### Highlights and lowlights of public comment

Clifford Truesdell: "No matter what Patricia Smith may think, Save Central Square is not the community. They are a subset of the community. The community is a lot more diverse, a lot less 60's-ish, and a lot better mannered." Mr. Truesdell disputed the

assertions that the Holmes project would cater only to upscale yuppies and argued that the addition of 100 people of any economic status to a neighborhood of 30,000 would have no discernible effect.

Bob Boulrice pointed out the potential benefits of a family-style clothing store as a principal tenant of the Holmes project. He argued against using funds from the Affordable Housing Trust for a project that is covered under the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and suggested that the best use of such funds would be for smaller projects spread around the entire city.

Julia Gregory described the battle over the Holmes proposal as both long-lasting and painful. She stated that she did not want to see another office building erected in Central Square and that the current Holmes proposal is a much preferred alternative to an as-of-right office building. She drew attention to current proposals in Area IV that would dwarf the Holmes proposal.

Persons associated with the group Save Central Square spoke against the Holmes project in themes that ran from concern for existing businesses to accusations of corruption among city officials. Laurie Taymor-Barry spoke mainly about the importance of the Lucy Parsons Center. Bill Cunningham's remarks focused on his perceptions of urban renewal and tokenism and denounced the recently passed Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. David Hoicka argued in favor of using funds from the Affordable Housing Trust for this project and advocate for a plaza similar to the one at Holyoke Center in Harvard Square. Basev Sen asserted that the Holmes project would draw high income shoppers from the suburbs. He characterized traffic studies as somewhere between shoddy and outright deceptive.

Ellen Al-Wequayan characterized the Holmes project as "the death of the neighborhoods." Jeff Duritz called Central Square the most unique place he'd ever lived and warning of "downstream social consequences" of the Holmes project. He railed against Starbucks, calling on the City to take the Holmes property by eminent domain. Michael Isenberg focused on his belief that the Holmes project was not consistent with the guidelines for development in Central Square. Waddie Taylor called for a moratorium on all development in Cambridge.

Lloyd Smith was inexcusably insulting to the City Council and others and was followed by James Williamson, who has become the poster boy for incivility during this entire process. Jimmy repeatedly accused City officials of lying and disrespecting guidelines for Central Square development as he went on for 15 minutes in spite of a 5 minute limit on public comment under the rules. He repeatedly characterized minor revisions to the Holmes proposal as "new proposals". He labeled the use of City funds for facade improvements in Central Square as bribes. He accused officials in the Community Development Department of deliberately withholding information from him. My favorite quote of his: "We ARE the rest of the community." If this is the case, God help us all.

My own remarks on the Holmes project went something like this: "When we were first introduced to the proposal a year ago, we viewed it as an opportunity. We understood the process through which the proposal would have to go. We asked for the inclusion of affordable housing and this was done. Some of us

asked for reduction in height and this was done. We asked for alterations to the massing of the building and this was done. We asked that light be allowed to reach Carl Barron Plaza and this was done. This was a long process, a very inclusive process, and a largely successful process. There have been calls for a greater percentage of affordable housing, as was done in the neighboring Church Corner apartments, but the density of that project was far in excess of what is called for in the Holmes proposal and should not be used as a model.”

Some have characterized the Holmes project in extreme terms. This is neither the death of a neighborhood nor anything else akin to the apocalypse. To paraphrase Freud, sometimes a building is just a building.

#### **After the vitriol**

A large portion of the regular Council meeting was dedicated to discussing City efforts in workforce development. This discussion was one in a series based on the stated goals and objectives of the City Council and the City Manager. To this observer it would seem that this is an area in which the City is doing a rather thorough job thanks to the Department of Human Services, its Director Jill Herold and Deputy Director Ellen Semonoff, and Personnel Director Michael Gardner. Though the input of the councillors was helpful, this hearing was about as interesting as watching grass grow.

The Council discussed with the Manager the legality of installing public pay phones on the exteriors of buildings without approval from the Pole and Conduit Commission. The City Manager said that he'd be making a recommendation to modify the current ordinance and to impose penalties for this practice. Councillor Toomey called for a neighborhood signoff before any such installation could be approved. Councillor Davis opined that the use of public telephones should be limited to the same hours as the place of business where they are located and that they should be located inside the place of business. Public telephones are used in a significant way to conduct drug sales at all hours and are now widely viewed more as a nuisance than as a convenience.

#### **Water filtration and treatment plant on the way**

There was a discussion about Cambridge drinking water prior to the Council's approval of the water rates for the following year. There will be an increase of 3.5% on the average water and sewer bill, but all of the increase is due to a 5% increase in sewer rates, a figure comparable to other communities. City Treasurer Jim Maloney characterized this as remarkable in light of the fact that we are about to embark on a \$75 million water project, the largest capital project in the city's history and more than double the previous largest project. He explained that the covering of the Payson Park Reservoir would be completely paid off in the next two years and that this next project would be financed through a 20 year bond. A surplus in the Water Fund has also been built up to further soften the impact of this project on ratepayers.

Bob Healy described how the City has been maximizing the use of revolving state loan funds for sewer projects. He emphasized that the new water filtration and treatment plant would take us into the 21st century and beyond. In response to Councillor Davis' leading question about whether this could be viewed as an example of the good fiscal policies that we've been practicing, Healy joked that it would be self-serving for him to agree but stated that a AAA bond rating on a \$75 million project isn't going

to hurt. He also pointed out that Cambridge water recently finished first in a competition conducted by Channel 7.

The Manager discussed the timeline for the construction of the new water filtration and treatment facility He explained the process whereby the subtrade bids would be opened this week and the general bids two weeks later. There will then be 30 days to analyze and award contracts but warned that with a contracts this large, protests could be filed. He estimated that demolition and construction could commence by May “good Lord willing and the creek don't rise.”

During the reconstruction, we will be buying Quabbin-Wachusett water from the MWRA and the rates for the first year will be fixed at whatever rate is in effect when we first draw water. It is expected that we'll be on MWRA water for 2 1/4 to 2 1/2 years.

#### **A clearer picture on Polaroid**

There was a two hour discussion about issues surrounding the development of the Polaroid site bounded by Memorial Drive, Pleasant St. and Putnam Ave. There are serious questions involved in this development, particularly those involving traffic impacts, but most of the discussion focused on placement of curb cuts and claims of environmental hazards.

This is, to me, one of the most frustrating and annoying aspects of civic engagement in Cambridge. People often choose to be or are forced to be intellectually dishonest when discussing development projects. The Polaroid situation is much like the discussions about Alewife in this respect. At Alewife there are some questions about soil contamination, but I don't think that anyone really believes that toxicity is at the core of that debate. I have long felt that the real issues at Alewife are the very real problems of traffic management and resistance by some to any and all development. Yet the discussion generally has to do with naphthalene or some other chemical compound. Meanwhile, the politicians gather round the perimeter looking for opportunities.

It's fair to say that some clarity about the Polaroid site grew out of this two hour, highly repetitive discussion. At the very least, I've come to better understand just how limited our planning tools are in negotiating around a development proposal such as this. The most perplexing aspect of the whole matter has to do with the cumulative impact of this development, the University Park buildout, and an inadequate local road network to deal with this and other regional developments. Except for the lack of transit, there are many similarities with the Alewife proposals, yet in both cases we spend an enormous amount of time talking about toxics and curb cuts.

#### **2) Mar 17 Planning Board Meeting - The Holmes Decision**

*[Warning - This account is saturated with opinion. While I can assure you that this is an objective account, my revulsion for this entire matter is so strong that you might not believe my claims of objectivity. - Robert Winters]*

This was the nadir, the bottom of the barrel of civic affairs for me. I have devoted thousands of hours of my time to a range of civic matters over the years. I have attended hundreds of City Council meetings. This meeting marked the very first time that I thought about chucking the whole thing. In fact, I have to wonder why anyone would ever want to serve (for free) on any city board or commission if it means having to suffer the kind of abuse that was doled out by this gang that calls itself “Save Central Square”.

This was to be a deliberative meeting of the Planning Board. In addition to many meetings of the Central Square Advisory Committee, there had been three public hearings by the Planning Board in which many of hours of testimony was heard. The Chair was unable to maintain order at this meeting. Unruly people shouted derogatory comments throughout the entire meeting, some crossing the line into obscenity. Notable among the unruly were David Slaney, Loyd Smith, Hatch Sterritt, William Cunningham. Ellen Al-Wequayan, Jeff Duritz, Jay Sheide, Mykol Larvie, Basev Sen, Laurie Taymor-Barry, and even Elie Yardin and Peter Valentine. At the head of this lineup was James Williamson whose entire reason for living seemed to be on the line. He had to be warned by a police officer at one point in his series of outbursts. Characteristically lurking at the edges was David Hoicka, a pathological lawyer with high hopes of using this whole sordid affair as a tool in his quest for elected office.

My most prominent feeling during this entire meeting was the fervent hope that it would soon end. But this was not just a meeting to make a decision. This was, for some in attendance, the end of an era, maybe the end of an extended childhood. I expected some emotion, but nothing like what actually took place. This was not about community. This was not about democracy. This was about ego and opportunism.

The meeting opened with Dennis Carlone spelling out the revisions to the design presented at the last meeting of the Planning Board on this matter. There were changes in the footprint of the building, greater setbacks on several sides, and a 10 ft. setback of the top floor along Mass. Ave. The forecourt facing Carl Barron Plaza was increased from 18 ft. to a 25 ft. depth and 50 ft. across, greatly expanding the publicly accessible space of the plaza. The Board discussed issues of conflicts between the residential and retail entrances from the forecourt.

A discussion about the possibility of additional trees was cut short by the unruly gang. Unable to proceed on that topic, the Chair moved the discussion on to the question of the affordable housing units that are included in the proposal. Amid the shouting, CDD Director Susan Schlesinger said that although this project meets the 15% provision of the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, there would be ongoing discussions with the owners about the possibility of adding additional affordable units.

There was an interesting discussion about what measures had been taken or could be taken to increase the opportunities for smaller retail tenants and especially for the current tenants. Many of these tenants have options to return and will be able to do so at their current rent levels for one year. There are questions about how many of these tenants actually intend to return or how they would fare paying market rents and possibly altering the nature of their businesses. The possibility of a "value-added" family type clothing store that would occupy much of the 2nd floor and some of the 1st floor was discussed by lawyer Jim Rafferty who would not disclose the name of the retailer with whom discussions have occurred. It has been widely rumored that a Filene's Basement store is a possibility. Planning Board member Laura Sheffield commented that many people in the Central square area now head to Watertown to get to such a store and that this would be a welcome addition to Central Square.

Several members of the Planning Board remarked that they could not address all retail issues in the Special Permit process, but that there were other mechanisms available through CDD.

Chair Paul Dietrich proposed that some kind of consumer advisory group be established by CDD. Hugh Russell proposed that a condition be included in the Special Permit that there be at least five spaces of less than 2000 sq. ft. in the retail mix, a suggestion motivated by the fact that several current tenants are in the 1000 to 1700 sq. ft. range. The owners were agreeable to this condition, but asked that there be a time limit on such a condition, citing possible financing problems.

In response to suggestions that a complete restart of the Special Permit was required due to recent revisions, Florrie Darwin explained why this was not required. This was reiterated by Paul Dietrich and by Les Barber from CDD.

Carolyn Mieth raised the issue of traffic mitigation. Susan Schlesinger drew comparisons with the traffic demand management (TDM) requirements that were included as a condition for the 2 Canal Park project, which is also adjacent to public transit, and suggested that the same condition should be a condition on this Special Permit. Lauren Preston from the Traffic Dept. outlined some of the changes that would be implemented in the Central Square area this year to improve traffic conditions.

Design review was the next topic and Roger Boothe from CDD made clear that an extensive design review was anticipated for the public edges, the facades, the sidewalks, etc. He explained that this process generally took place administratively, requiring CDD signoff for various design issues but not generally requiring a Planning Board signoff. Florrie Darwin recommended that this remain a CDD signoff.

Regarding the matter of the Planning Board getting involved in matters of tenant selection, there was basically unanimous opposition to this by the Planning Board. It was pointed out by Scott Lewis that there is no legal way to do it. Hugh Russell suggested that a condition be put in the Permit that requires the owner to meet periodically with a consumer advisory group, but Florrie Darwin advised against doing something that would create a false impression of real authority.

Finally, the Planning Board went through the Notice of Conditions one by one. At about this point, the harassment from the crowd had reached such a point that it became clear that Chair Paul Dietrich was no longer able to move the meeting along, and Florrie Darwin and Laura Sheffield did an excellent job in helping the meeting toward its conclusion.

The Special Permit required five votes of the Planning Board. It passed by a 6 to 1 margin with Hugo Salemme the only dissenting vote. There were other matters before the Planning Board that night, but there was no way in which I was going to stay there.

As I was leaving City Hall, I was descended upon by a number of these malcontents. Most notable was the remark by one of them that my enjoying cordial relations with city officials was a form of corruption, apparently implying that the shouting of invectives from across the rail is somehow a truer form of democracy. As I walked down Mass. Ave., I had to endure shouts of "go back to Harvard" by one of them who has tried to paint me as an elitist since last summer. My father sold insurance in the South Bronx and never made a decent living. My mother was a security guard. It infuriates me to be cast as elitist by people who know nothing about me and have no place claiming to represent working class interests. Thankfully, it was St. Patrick's Day and the Guinness was flowing at a nearby watering hole. If ever there was a time that I needed a beer, that was it.

### 3) March 23 City Council meeting

The public comment period of this meeting began with an informative presentation by Julia Gregory of issues surrounding a proposed office development in Area 4 in the vicinity of Broadway and Webster St. At issue is the propriety of a private developer entering into a mitigation agreement with some neighborhood residents as a means of negotiating around a rezoning proposal for the affected area. The current zoning proposal is known as the Gregory petition which supersedes the Carroll petition which was allowed to expire while negotiations were continuing. A curious aspect to this situation is that the developer has established a new neighborhood association for the purpose of carrying out the proposed benefits of the agreement while not involving the existing Area 4 Coalition which supported the Carroll and Gregory petitions. An April 1 meeting has been scheduled for 7pm at the Fletcher School to discuss the proposed agreement. Ms. Gregory characterized the agenda for this meeting as too much and too fast to allow for an informed vote. The developer's proposal calls for a 113 ft. tall office building with 4 floors of above ground parking on one side of the development and 6 floors with 3 floors of exposed parking on another side. It is proposed as exclusively for office use.

Many in the surrounding established residential neighborhood prefer a mixed use development with housing, retail, and some office use. They view this office development as unfriendly to the neighborhood and want the City Council to be involved either through the rezoning petition or through other means. There is great concern that residents who agree to mitigations proposed by the developer will feel obligated to not support the rezoning effort. There is actually a clause in the mitigation agreement that allows the developer the right to withdraw if the Gregory petition is pending.

Perhaps the greatest issue here is that of a thoroughly inadequate approach to social choice. The propriety of a downzoning effort, a mitigation agreement, or anything else that affects whole neighborhoods and more should not depend on how many people any interested party can draw to one or several meetings. Fairness and democracy call for involvement by duly elected officials or city administration acting on behalf of elected officials. There is something unsettling about any one group of unelected activists representing themselves as spokespersons for neighborhoods or as negotiators of mitigation agreements.

#### **Building on the Fresh Pond Reservation**

Amy Nadel spoke in opposition to plans now on the table for a new building to be constructed on the Fresh Pond Reservation as part of the restructuring and reconstruction of the Neville Manor Nursing Home as an assisted living facility. She stated that although 4000 sq. ft. of land is being returned to the reservation, 40,000 sq. ft. of a DPW storage yard will be built upon. She and two other speakers made references to how ground water flows under the Neville Manor area toward Fresh Pond when the pond is below a certain level. [The Water Dept. maintains Fresh Pond at a sufficiently high level to create a hydrological gradient causing ground water to generally travel away from Fresh Pond.]

Kenneth Bowles, a former employee of 18 years at Neville Manor, questioned whether the chief beneficiaries of the Neville Manor project would be Cambridge residents. He described how admittance is based on patient care points and that 50% of the funding comes from federal Medicare and how this requires the

City to not discriminate in favor of local residents. He cautioned against this "confiscatory quagmire" in which Cambridge public land is being appropriated for a use that more properly should be met by the private sector.

Teresa Hill gave a particularly eloquent speech about the role of Fresh Pond as "Cambridge's backyard" and drew a parallel with the recently passed moratorium on backyard infill development. She called for a moratorium on all future construction on the Fresh Pond Reservation.

#### **Holmes aftermath**

Even though the Holmes proposal for Central Square passed by a 6-1 margin at the Planning Board, several speakers addressed this topic. David Hoicka's words made it seem as though he did not understand the meaning of this vote as he continued to propose alternate plans. He also misinterpreted what the Planning Board said regarding future community input in attracting and selecting future commercial tenants in the Holmes block. Another speaker accused the Community Development Department of conflict of interest.

John Pitkin, while deftly distancing himself from the Save Central Square group after the fact, stated that "the vast majority of residents of Mid-Cambridge are not very happy with this project." [One has to wonder what sampling technique was used in deriving that conclusion.] In reference to a Council Order on civility, he urged the Council to bear in mind that although there were a few disruptive individuals, there were thousands of others who were unhappy with the project and that the breakdown in the public process began last summer. True enough.

There were several other speakers who touched on topics like fear of environmental hazards at the Polaroid site, the North Mass. Ave. reconstruction, and the Anderson zoning petition. That petition calls for rezoning the Business B1 and B2 zones that straddle Mass. Ave. between Hancock St. and Trowbridge St. and city-wide residential downzoning in response to the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance passed at the March 2 City Council meeting.

The regular Council meeting was relative short but there were a few notable moments.

- a) A communication from State Rep. Toomey informed us that Acting Governor Cellucci had signed into law enabling legislation that will allow the Licence Commission to curtail the hours of operation of package liquor stores in response to certain violations. This legislation grew out of efforts by the Central Square Neighborhood Coalition about five years ago to restrict the sale of alcohol to intoxicated individuals during early morning hours when young children were on their way to school.
- b) An Order by Councillors Born and Russell (a.k.a. the dynamic duo) suggested alternate approaches to structuring City Council meetings such as having a less formal work-study meeting once per month. This was one of several Orders that grew out of information derived from the most recent National League of Cities meeting.
- c) Another Order by Councillors Born and Russell warned of pending federal legislation (HR1534 and S1256) that would seriously affect the ability of cities and towns to carry out land use controls such as zoning. This legislation would remove the state appeals process entirely and send all lawsuits directly to

the federal courts. Vice President Al Gore has stated that President Clinton will veto the bill should it pass.

- d) The Council went into Executive Session to discuss legal issues associated with the City's draft zoning petition which responds to a court decision in the case of Danehy vs. City of Cambridge involving North Mass. Ave.
- e) Councillor Reeves gave an eloquent account of a woman from Windsor St. now reaching her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. He described the value of "rootedness" in a community and, while suggesting that people live longer in Cambridge, remarked on the virtues of a City in which it is safe enough for 94-year-olds to walk the streets at night.
- f) The highlight of this meeting for me was Councillor Sheila Russell's heartfelt account of the role played by the Marist Fathers and the Holy Union Sisters at Our Lady of Pity Church in North Cambridge, widely known as "The French Church." She described in wonderful detail growing up in that area and of the good-natured rivalry between children from St. John's Church and the French Church and of the dedication of the nuns at both churches to serving their community. "That parish was a wonderful, vibrant parish. They did everything for their parishioners. They had plays, they had shows, they had suppers, and they just kept all the traditions alive. So we thank them for what they did for the North Cambridge community and we will miss them." A short while later, Councillor Russell said "I met my husband at that church. They used to have the University Trio - Nellie, Oscar, and Spike." It is for moments like this that I continue to go to City Council meetings and to listen to the stories that are told there.
- g) Councillors Born, Davis, Russell, and Sullivan and Mayor Duehay spoke on the Order introduced by Councillors Russell and Sullivan addressing the problem of incivility at public meetings of late, especially those related to the Holmes project in Central Square. A sample of the comments:
- Mayor Duehay: "That Planning Board meeting was out of control. We cannot allow people to humiliate a public board."
- Councillor Russell: "That's why it's so hard to get people to serve on boards. We hear criticism of the Manager for not making timely appointments to boards. Why should people serve if they're treated so shabbily?"
- Councillor Sullivan: "This Order is not directed at the 'thousands of people that were not doing that.' It is directed at those whose actions quell the open meeting. We received a letter from one person who left because she felt intimidated. We have a proud tradition of allowing public comment and we'll continue to do so. When a few individuals intimidate, this is a violation of the open meeting law and a violation of others. Forcefulness is OK. Threatening is not OK. They have crossed the line and should not be tolerated. It does not serve their cause well."
- Councillor Davis: "We should have training for Chairs in holding the standard of civility. Threatening behavior is out of line. In this city, of all places, which prides itself on having many points of view and being able to allow people to have many points of view and to be free to express them. And if that freedom is abridged by some people who harass and threaten others, that's just entirely wrong."
- Councillor Born: "Thanks to the members of the Planning Board, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Historical Commission, and

all the other boards. You can disagree with their judgments, but it is not conscionable for any private citizen to assail the integrity of those that serve on these boards."

Council Order 44: (Councillors Russell and Sullivan)

WHEREAS: Many City Council and board meetings have been held in past months which dealt with spirited issues; and

WHEREAS: Under the First Amendment to the Constitution we are all entitled to "freedom of expression;" and

WHEREAS: It has always been a source of pride to Cantabrigians that we are able, for the most part, to deal with issues in a civilized manner; and

WHEREAS: Members of various boards serve voluntarily and, instead of being harassed, threatened, and intimidated, should be respected and thanked for their service; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record as thanking the members of various boards for their dedication and urge all those who appear before them to extend to them the courtesy that they deserve.

Amen to that.

I'll close with a letter dated March 9 that was sent by Fran Wirta of Cambridgeport to the Planning Board. Copies were sent to Mayor Duehay and Vice-Mayor Galluccio:

To Members of the Cambridge Planning Board:

Having attended the Board meeting of March 3rd and having witnessed the quality of public testimony, I feel compelled to record my concern and criticism.

Those of us who supported the Holmes Development in Central Square have been exposed to growing aggressiveness, belligerence, arrogance and irrationality on the part of those groups and individuals opposing the development. Their confrontational behavior began about a year ago and has become relentless and out of control.

This matter of control is my concern and criticism. During this meeting of March 3rd, there was not a strict adherence to each individual speaking the allotted time of two minutes. There were boings and outbursts from members of the audience and there was specific harassment of singled out individuals toward the end of the meeting. Whoever is the chair of these meetings must exert strong control to effect order and fairness in the proceedings.

During this last year there has been a marked increase in the amount of this unacceptable behavior during public testimony, not only at Planning Board sessions but also at Monday night City Council and at various city committee meetings. This behavior can seriously impair a democratic process of civil exchange which must include respect and tolerance for differing points of view. Genuine debate is stifled, and with personal attack on individuals, there is direct harassment. When a number of individuals are allowed to stretch their public presentation time, slander other individuals and aggressively insist they have not been adequately heard, they are curtailing the free speech of everyone else.

I urge members of the Planning Board to consider seriously this threat to our democratic public process and to take the necessary steps to reestablish any and all strict measures necessary to restoring order.

After the Holmes proposal, there will be other city developments and new programs. Will we continue to face this

kind of destructive force? City officials in positions of authority, I urge you to reestablish an atmosphere of fair and even exchange.

Sincerely, Frances Wirta, Erie Street

**Scorecard: Mar 16 and Mar 23 Council Orders**

**P** = policy-related; **I** = requests for info.;  
**R** = rules and routine procedural items;  
**M** = maintenance (potholes, traffic, etc.);  
**D** = deaths; **C** = congratulatory orders; **A** = announcements  
 Here's the approximate tally of orders introduced:

Councillor	P	I	R	M	D	C	A
<b>Born</b>	5	0	2	3	1	3	2
<b>Davis</b>	2	3	1	2	2	3	0
<b>Duehay</b>	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
<b>Galluccio</b>	0	0	0	1	2	6	0
<b>Reeves</b>	0	4	0	5	0	12	2
<b>Russell</b>	3	0	3	5	6	5	1
<b>Sullivan</b>	1	0	0	1	8	16	2
<b>Toomey</b>	0	1	0	0	4	9	4
<b>Triantafillou</b>	0	0	0	1	1	3	1
<b>Total by category</b>	9	8	4	17	16	50	12

**4) Mar 24 Library 21 meeting on siting of main library**

In a meeting attended by about 50 people, the siting phase of the proposed new main library began in earnest with the consultant firm of Sasaki Associates.

David Hertzal, a planner and urban designer with Sasaki, led off. "This is not just about finding a piece of land on which to place a building. The siting of a library is a very conscious act of city-making. Creating a civic heart must also be financially feasible. The process will be completed by June with 3 to 5 sites selected, including the current site of the main library. There will be two more public meetings. At the April 30 meeting, there will be some specific sites to consider. We expect to narrow down the list to five sites at that meeting. At the June 10 meeting, we will present the final alternatives with evaluations."

Rick Dimond detailed the size of the proposed building and compared its proposed 90,000 sq. ft. to the current main library building (one-third of that) and to City Hall (51,000 sq. ft.). He stressed the concept of "getting out of the box" in order to consider some possibilities that might not immediately come to mind.

Jonathan Austin was next in detailing what the requirements would translate to for buildings with different heights from one to five stories.

One phrase of note was the notion that the new library should have "postcard status", an indication of the level of prominence that it might exhibit. We were treated to a slide show of actual postcards of libraries with a variety of characteristics in Massachusetts and around the country, ranging from the "library in the park" theme to more urban varieties. We were challenged to consider what kind of theme might be appropriate for Cambridge.

As part of the "opening up the box" exercise, we saw slides of how a library building of various dimensions might fit into sites ranging from the Common to Inman Square to Central Square to the Fresh Pond area and a wide range of other locations around Cambridge. These were presented more as exercises than as

proposals. Different scenarios for handling parking were presented, some integrated into the library building and others located at nearby sites.

There was much discussion about the pros and cons of locating a library close to transit, near the Charles River, in an existing building vs. a new building, and of building several floors of the building below ground. There was some discussion of whether eminent domain should be used and of what the priorities would be if the "perfect site" had some existing housing on it.

We were reminded that one plan already exists for constructing the new library on its current site, the so-called J Scheme. During a discussion of the possibility of a mixed use project that had either retail and/or housing in addition to a library, one person emphatically said, "It might be nice to have a library that is simply a civic presence and not the outcome of a political deal." I really appreciated his saying that.

In the coming weeks, Sasaki will be meeting with a range of real estate people around Cambridge to scope out the possibilities. Many of us are hoping that a truly brilliant proposal may emerge from this process, but only time will tell and not that much time either. The whole process will be completed within just a few months.

**5) On becoming a True Cantabrigian**

In response to my remarks about living in Cambridge for 20 years and still being thought of as a visitor in some circles, I received some wonderful and greatly appreciated responses. Here are a few:

**Peter D.:** I'm reminded a story of my father's about small-town Vermont. It seems that someone moved to a little town from the big city somewhere else, and thought it quaint that he was always referred to as "the furriner". After a couple of decades, though, it began to bother him, especially now that he had lived in the town longer than many of the younger locals who called him that.

Finally, he flat out asked someone why they kept calling him the foreigner, and was told "well, if you put a mouse in the oven, it wouldn't make it a biscuit, would it?"

**Joanne L.** offered the complete text of a City Council Order that would declare me to be a True Cantabrigian with all the rights, privileges and obligations associated with this new status (except for attending alumni parties at local schools).

**Phil S.:** As it is said in Charlestown: "How long does one have to live in Charlestown until you are a townie?"  
 "Until it says it on your birth certificate."

**George M.:** This point was driven home for me a number of years ago when I read about a long-time Jamaica Plain resident who was running for the City Council there. At one of her public meetings, a kid barely out of his teens asked her how long she had lived in the neighborhood. She responded by saying she'd been there for 20 or 30 years. He dismissed her experience by saying, "Well, I was BORN here."

**Jamie S.:** I do think I have determined another indicator of the native born and outsider, at least for those who have moved here from other parts of Massachusetts. When I turn to the obituary page in the Globe, I still first look to the town where I grew up. Perhaps when my eye is drawn to the Cambridge listings first, I will have arrived.

And the best response of all:

**Glenn Koocher:** Here's how you, too, can become a lifetime Cambridge resident (a.k.a. 'Cantabrigian') just like some of the rest of us.

But first a caveat: not everybody can undergo the conversion from outsider to one of us. And, remember, that if you're one of *them*, it's even harder.

And the discrimination of who is what goes both ways. I've known lifetime Cambridge people who wanted to become one of *them*. They spend their lives denying their East Cambridge, North Cambridge, or Cambridgeport roots, going to prestigious colleges, and altering their dialects hoping to win acceptance (e.g., more than four #1 votes from Coolidge Hill) and CCA endorsements. It doesn't work. When push comes to shove, they'll always vote for one of their own as opposed to someone with an ethnic last name, a hard Boston accent, or blue collar parentage.

Moreover, if you're associated with the Cambridge Civic Association or a left wing self-styled progressive group, your place of birth is irrelevant - unless it *is* Cambridge, in which case it is counterproductive to have been born here unless you fit into any five of the following:

your people came over on a sailing ship more than 150 years ago.  
your name isn't too ethnic.

your dialect isn't too Boston.

you went to a prep school and a private college.

your parent(s) happened to live here because they're on the

Harvard or MIT faculty.

you were born here only because the Mt. Auburn maternity ward or Cahill House (the Cambridge Hospital's maternity ward until the 1960s) was where your family's obstetrician worked (e.g., in the case of actor Sam Waterston).

you're willing to practice Catholic-bashing as the anti-Semitism of the left.

you are willing to practice political correctness as your substitute for organized religion.

you are a member of a politically correct racial, ethnic, or sexual preference constituency.

Note, just because you were "born here," or have deep roots doesn't make you a Cantabrigian in everyone's eyes. For example, former Assistant Superintendent Oliver S. Brown had Cambridge roots going back to the 1670s and had a grandmother on Craigie Street, but it wasn't good enough. First, with a name like Oliver, you're in trouble from the start. Second, his people came from the wrong part of town.

Still, you, too, can be part of the long time, good old boy/girl network, but you have to work at it. For example, Alice Wolf still hasn't been able to break in. Back in 1975, she shot back at then-School Committee candidate, but current ESPN broadcaster/sports talk show host, and Herald and Boston Magazine scribe, Steve Buckley (Fayette Park & Prospect Street) with, "I may not be a lifetime Cambridge resident like Steve, but I've lived here since before he was born." Consider the following:

1. Trace your lineage to a former (or better yet, prominent) Cantabrigian or family of the right political stripe. A lot of lifetime Cambridge people were actually born and raised in Arlington to which their parents or grandparents moved after selling the house in Cambridge for a killing. These Arlingtonians are instantly and permanently grandfathered in because their

families were one of us. This works for Irish, Italians, Polish, Lithuanians, Portuguese, Armenians, and, if they have blue collar Cambridge roots, a few Jews.

2. Marry a local girl or boy. This automatically grandfathered you in. My mother's family (and this was something of a secret) was actually from Winthrop and (even more of a secret) Chelsea. But after she married into the Koocher family in 1946, that was never an issue for any of us. Outsiders who married locals were welcomed in right away. Jimmy Tingle's father had a southern accent, but he married a thoroughbred, blue collar Cambridge girl with strong roots in East Cambridge. He was always totally accepted and considered a native.

3. Get a blue collar city job and work it for a while. No matter what your roots are, if you've ridden shotgun on a public works truck, dug trenches for the Water Department, or washed the floor at the Cambridge Hospital, you can get special consideration. (Working at the library does not count). This takes a few months so you can be seen. Make sure that everyone knows you play the football card every week in season. This works fast.

4. Change your politics and practice it. Start going to times, and make contributions to our candidates. Perform your grassroots dues by standing out at visibilities, handing out poll cards, sending dear friend post cards, and....Spend some serious time at Charlie's Kitchen, Guido's Florida Cafe, Puglese's, Joey Macs, the Druid, or the Windsor Cafe. If you get hungry, try the S&S, Frank's Steak House, Cambridge Common, or any Dunkin Donuts. If you must go out of town to dine, Greg's, an inch over the border into Watertown, is also acceptable. These tactics work, but they take a long time. Be prepared to wait as long as a generation.

5. Change your drinking habits. Switch to Lite Beer and never be seen with wine of any kind unless it comes out of a bottle costing no more than \$1.99 and is consumed out of a brown paper bag.

6. Never buy anything but a newspaper in Harvard Square and, then, only from Nini's.

7. Work hard at changing your dialect and knowing the local nuance. The Boston accent and the vaguely distinguishable Cambridge variation is a basis for discrimination by outsiders, but a sign of acceptability to us. Try to understand the very unique things that help us identify outsiders from the rest of us. For example, a real Cambridge person knows that Elm Street (e.g., intersects Broadway) is pronounced El-um, and that Elm Street near Porter Square is pronounced as a one syllable word. We also know the difference between the Kennedy School (emphasis on the first Ken) at Harvard and the Kennedy School (emphasis on the School) in East Cambridge. Refer to the Harvard Square theater as the University Theater and brag about how you don't go there any more, but how much you miss the Central Square Theater or the Inman Show.

8. Read the obituary page daily. Know where all the bodies are buried, and who's related to whom. Start going to wakes of people you really knew but whose family might not have been expecting you. This might not get you totally accepted, but will make you amply tolerated - even genuinely liked (e.g., Geneva Malenfant).

9. Have a basic level of political knowledge of our local leaders. Never use last names when referring to Walter or Michael and

remember that it is always Edward, not Eddie, when speaking as an insider of the revered Sullivan family. Never refer to Al without mentioning the Vellucci. And, when you refer to the Maynard School, make sure you call it the old Roberts School first and then make a point to mention what a great guy Joe Maynard was (may his soul rest in peace).

10. When attending the count, hang out with us, not with them.
11. NEVER boast about how you loved the Yankees or Knicks as a kid, or how much you hate hockey.
12. And, most important, next time you're in Charlie's Kitchen, or Guido's, or Puglese's, the Druid, or the Windsor, and you see some local pundits, always buy a few rounds.

#### **6) THE ELECTRICITY STILL WORKS! - by Paul Schlaver, Exec. Director, Cambridge Consumers' Council**

You may not have noticed, but the electric industry in Massachusetts under went a major change on March 1st. The correct term is "restructuring". Even though Cambridge customers will still receive a bill from COM/Electric (Cambridge Electric Light Company) some restructuring differences have already occurred and will keep occurring over the months and years ahead.

The first tangible change that any customer will notice involves the cost of electricity. On March 1st the 10% "STANDARD OFFER" kicked in. This means that all electricity customers in Massachusetts will begin to receive a 10% across the board reduction in their electric bills, first seen in their April bills. In September of 1999 another 5% reduction should occur.

The new law also enhances all current consumer protections, continues the low-income discount programs, increases energy efficiency programs and requires all competitive power suppliers to be licensed by the state.

The basic intent of the complex law is to introduce competition into the electric industry and provide consumers with choices and lower prices while assuring continued reliable service. Over the course of the next few years consumers might choose a competitive power supplier to try to maximize their savings. The chosen supplier will provide the electricity they need to the local distribution company (COMElectric).

Many residential or small business electricity customers may not want to face the potentially confusing process of choosing an electricity supplier, unless the savings will greatly increase beyond the Standard Offer. (No supplier company has emerged as yet that can beat the current 10% Standard Offer discount.)

The legislation allows for the creation of "aggregators" or buying clubs to be established so that the bulk buying power from the combined electricity used by all the members of this group can lower their costs. A municipality could become an aggregator on behalf of its residents; or the grouping could be focused on membership in an organization such as AARP, a union, a church, automobile association, etc.

The City of Cambridge is studying the impact of the new law on the City and will evaluate what role it might play on behalf of the Cambridge residential and business community.

COMElectric is trying to educate the public about this new law and its impact for its customers. Read your bill stuffers carefully!

A consumer hotline has been established by the state to answer questions. A "Consumer Guide to Understanding Changes in the Electric Industry in Massachusetts" is available upon request.

The Salvation Army office in Central Square processes the low-income discount applications. If one's income is below \$13,808 you may qualify. Add \$4,760 to that amount for each additional household member to determine eligibility.

Inquiries could also be made to the Consumers' Council about this new law:

STATE HOT LINE: 1-888-758-4469

SALVATION ARMY: 547-3400

CONSUMERS' COUNCIL: 349-6150

#### **Calendar:**

##### **Mon, Mar 30**

Noon - 5:00pm **Urban Ring workshop** in conference Room 1 at the State Transportation Building at 10 Park Plaza in Boston.

These are real working meetings for those who haven't been to a workshop before.

5:30pm **City Council** meeting (City Hall, Sullivan Chamber)

7:00pm **City Council** hearing to discuss development in Cambridge in general. (Sullivan Chamber)

##### **Wed, Apr 1**

The **Elder Affairs Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss the North Massachusetts Avenue Road Construction Project as follows:

9:00am - 11:00am Russell Apts. - 2050 Mass. Ave.

11:00am - 1:00pm Burns Apts. - Churchill Ave.

5:00pm The **Housing and Community Development**

**Committee** will hold a public hearing to discuss and receive comments on the study of the impacts of the end of Rent

Control and to discuss affordable housing efforts over the next two years. (Sullivan Chamber)

6:30pm The **Housing and Community Development**

**Committee** will hold a public hearing to discuss and receive comments on a report in response to Council Order #37 of December 22, 1997 regarding a Policy to maintain and foster new small businesses and to discourage displacement by large national chains. (Sullivan Chamber)

##### **Thurs, Apr 2**

5:30pm The **Health and Hospital Committee** will hold a public hearing to discuss the 1998 Public Health Assessment Improving the Health of Cambridge prepared by the Cambridge Public Health Commission. (Sullivan Chamber)

##### **Fri, Apr 3**

10:00am The **Public Safety Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss the staffing levels at the Police Department. (Ackermann Room)

##### **Wed, Apr 8**

11:00 - 3:00pm The **Government Operations Committee** will meet for a facilitated update of its Goals as they relate to the Fiscal Year '99 budget. (Conference Room - 51 Inman Street)

6:00pm The **Claims Committee** will conduct a public meeting to act on any and all claims brought before the City. (Ackermann Room)



7:00pm The **Public Service and Housing and Community Development Committees** will conduct a joint public hearing to consider the North Cambridge Roadway Construction Project and take public testimony regarding the current design plans. (Fitzgerald School)

#### Mon, Apr 13

5:30pm Regular **City Council** Meeting (Sullivan Chamber)  
7:00pm The City Council will conduct a public hearing to discuss the North Massachusetts Avenue Road Construction Project. (Sullivan Chamber)

#### Tues, Apr 14

The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct the following public meetings:

5:30pm Update on staff work on a proposal for regulating newsboxes. (Sullivan Chamber)  
6:00pm Proposed amendment to the Municipal Code on the enforcement provisions as they relate to the placement of public pay telephones. (Sullivan Chamber)  
6:30pm Proposed amendment to the Municipal code providing for the expense of the connection of the building sewer or storm drain to the City's main. (Sullivan Chamber)

#### Wed, Apr 15

11:00am The **Finance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss the Fiscal Year 1999 Budget. (Sullivan Chamber)  
6:00pm The **Finance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss the Fiscal Year 1999 School Department Budget. (Sullivan Chamber)

#### Tues, Apr 28

6:30pm The **Traffic and Transportation Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss the two reports submitted by the City Manager's Truck Traffic Advisory Committee. (Sullivan Chamber)

#### Wed, Apr 29

11:00am The **Finance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss the Fiscal Year 1999 Budget. (Sullivan Chamber)  
6:00pm The **Finance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss the Fiscal Year 1999 School Department Budget. (Sullivan Chamber)

#### Thurs, Apr 30

6:30pm - 8:30pm The **Library 21 Committee and Sasaki Associates** will present and discuss the detailed site criteria and possible main library sites to be evaluated. (Sasaki Lecture Hall, Main Library)

#### Wed, May 6

11:00am The **Finance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss the Fiscal Year 1999 Budget (IF NEEDED) (Sullivan Chamber)  
5:30pm The **Traffic and Transportation Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss the City Council priorities as they relate to traffic and transportation issues. (Sullivan Chamber)  
6:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public meeting on a proposed amendment to the Municipal Code entitled "Parking and Transportation Demand Management Planning; Parking Space Registration. (Sullivan Chamber)

#### Wed, May 13

The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss the following:

5:30pm Proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to rezone the Northern Massachusetts Avenue area. (Sullivan Chamber)  
6:00pm Proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance on the petition of Julia O. Gregory, et al to rezone land in the Neighborhood Four Area. (Sullivan Chamber)  
6:30pm Proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinances on the petition of Leo Anderson, et al to rezone land in the areas on and near Massachusetts Avenue in the Riverside and Mid-Cambridge areas. (Sullivan Chamber)

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