
Cambridge Civic Journal

Issue 12

14 September 1998

BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE

CCJ web site: <http://www.math.harvard.edu/~rwinters/ccj.html>

Contents:

- 0) Foreword
- 1) July 27 City Council meeting
- 2) Sept 1 Planning Board meeting
- 3) No Redeeming Value?
- 4) Moving to Quabbin
- 5) Calendar

0) Foreword

It's been a while since the last issue. Part of this is attributable to the summer lull – everyone knows that civic life in Cambridge hibernates in summer. A more significant factor is more metaphysical. My background is in mathematics and theoretical physics, not in journalism, government, or politics. A late-night conversation with a woman I met in Harvard Square in early August helped to revive my interest in natural philosophy, quantum mechanics, and cosmology.

This creates a big problem for the civic man. How does one reconcile a focus on things on a cosmological scale with relatively inconsequential things like zoning, traffic calming, and political campaigns? I actually did have a struggle with this. Though I managed to make it to one Planning Board meeting and a couple of candidate debates, Stephen Hawking captured my attention far more than either Alice Wolf or Anthony Galluccio.

Don't get me wrong. Alice and Anthony are both excellent choices for the State House, but neither of them can dazzle like Hawking. Over in the 28th District, rising stars Dennis Benzan and Jarrett Barrios are excellent challengers to incumbent Alvin Thompson. The field of candidates is much more appealing than two years ago.

In the 8th Congressional District, who the hell knows what will happen on Tuesday. As with many voters, without a ranked ballot and a better election system I am forced to think in terms of strategic voting. I just wish this state and this country would wake up and realize the value of better election mechanisms. Instant Runoff, basically the same system as we use in our municipal elections but with one person to be elected, would be a good start. I see no reason why the state political parties could not adopt such a system.

I suppose things could be worse. In Washington, the federal government has diminished itself to tabloid status. I have become worried that my country is entering a period of sexual McCarthyism. Opinion polls suggest that although many people in the U.S. Congress have gone off the deep end, most of the country is reacting pretty sensibly and that gives me hope. And now, back to Cambridge.....

1) July 27 City Council meeting

The Midsummer Meeting of the Cambridge City Council was a marathon affair lasting over 8 hours. Three significant zoning matters were settled - one by partial passage, one by defeat, and one by strategic inaction. The ever-popular topic of truck bans created friction between councillors and between one councillor and the city manager.

Public comment

This was a three-hour tour of truck routes, traffic calming, condo conversion, development, East Timor, nuclear reactors, asbestos, recycling barrels, parking garages, Rindge Towers laid sideways, bicycles, police brutality in Plymouth, spot zoning, class conflict,

carpetbaggers, church bells, chemistry, tenant subsidies, capitalism, Trolley Square, inclusionary zoning, open space, and corporate citizenship. And people wonder why I go to City Council on Monday nights.

The continuing saga of what is to be done with the curbs and sidewalks of the Agassiz neighborhood after the upcoming sewer improvements brought out a number of speakers with conflicting views. The potential loss of 40 (arguably illegal) on-street parking spaces appears to be at the core of the conflict. Rather than simply saying "Don't take away my parking!" - a sentiment that most people can understand - opponents of the city's traffic-calming plan treated us to lectures about democracy and class conflict. I don't mean to dismiss the objections. When on-street parking in a neighborhood has reached equilibrium, the loss of just a few spots can translate into more circling around and longer walks for anyone arriving home late. Enforcing the law on distances from parked cars to street corners will benefit public safety to be sure. However, if the City were to strictly enforce all the laws, such as the one that says you can't park close to a curb cut, there would be revolution in the People's Republic.

The culmination of the whole W.R. Grace business appears to be drawing near. With zoning recommendations from the Planning Board and the possibility that the City Council might actually have to vote on what is to happen in that area, neighborhood activists actively played the asbestos card during public comment. The stakes are clearly being raised as environmental issues, zoning, pending lawsuits, and economic value of the affected property are being laid out on the table more openly than they have been in years. A number of speakers insisted on a public meeting between W.R. Grace and area residents on the topic of further asbestos testing. As of this writing, this request appears to have been granted. A meeting will occur in late September and will be conducted by a state-appointed mediator. The Planning Board zoning recommendations for the W.R. Grace site will be reported at the Sept 14 Council meeting.

Several people offered their opinions on the Frankelton petition to rezone properties along the Linear Park corridor in North Cambridge. Most entertaining was the assertion by Susan Maguire that what will happen if the Frankelton Petition does not pass would be "like Rindge Towers turned on its side." Others, including a number of members of the Planning Board, have argued that the petition as filed would effectively lock in the commercial uses in that corridor indefinitely because all economic incentives to convert to residential use would be removed.

Speaking on the Anderson petition were a number of people who came out in response to questionable allegations that a large parking garage was being planned for the corner of Dana St. and Mass. Ave. I never cease to be amazed by the way that activists will use scare tactics to promote their agendas in Cambridge. Easily the most interesting interchange of the night regarding the Anderson petition occurred when Clinton St. resident Alex Steinberg spoke on the Anderson petition and on an unrelated matter about rent subsidies. Councillor Toomey interrupted Mr. Steinberg to chastise him for asking for public subsidies at a time when he was benefiting from increased rents and real estate values since the end of rent control. This set the stage for a "Triantafillou moment" later in the meeting.

Church bells chimed in at public comment as representatives from the Archdiocese, clock restoration expert David Graf, and acoustic

expert Anthony Hoover addressed the City Council about such things as quarter-striking clock mechanisms, resonance cavities, and ambient noise levels. Councillors Born and Davis were particularly engaged and interrupted the speakers with numerous questions about the physics of sound propagation and clock mechanisms.

The last significant part of public comment involved officials from Camp-Dresser-McKee (CDM) touting their record of community service and charity. This was in the context of the Gregory petition which would have limited how much development could occur on lower Broadway, including plans for CDM to locate in the proposed Bulfinch development in that area. Councillor Davis and especially Councillor Reeves disputed the claims of CDM and called on them to show greater "corporate responsibility" in light of the fact that CDM has been awarded some very significant contracts by the City.

Keep on truckin'

The theme of trucks, hazardous cargoes, and nighttime truck bans was heard throughout the meeting. There was a heated discussion of how a nighttime ban recently came to be instituted on Kirkland St. with a resultant increase in truck traffic on Cambridge St. and elsewhere. This led to a discussion of several Council orders concerning recent hazardous spills in the Harvard Square area and elsewhere. Deputy City Manager Rich Rossi did not disappoint as he went into great detail on the circumstances involved in each of the incidents.

This was not enough for Councillor Triantafillou who went on at length about how she would like the administration to be more proactive in these matters and more forthcoming with information to the Council. I was perplexed by her conflicting expressions of disdain for Council discussions on truck traffic and her insistence that she be kept more informed of operational matters handled by the Police and Traffic Departments. Mr. Rossi credited the Council for bringing attention to issues involving truck traffic and said that this has brought greater awareness to the Police Department and increased enforcement of pertinent laws.

The issue of a citywide nighttime truck ban led to a telling exchange between Councillor Triantafillou and City Manager Healy:

Triantafillou: "I'll be 90 years old before we have a truck ban in this city.

Healy: "A valid one, perhaps."

Triantafillou: "Valid or Shmalid or Invalid! Get me one!"

Healy: "It's not my responsibility to lead the Council down a path that would result in costly litigation that we may not prevail on just because it's the easy answer to the complaint."

Principal issues in the question of truck bans on particular streets and citywide are the potential for simply moving the traffic to other (possibly more populous) streets, unfairly moving it to neighboring cities, and incompatibility with federal commerce laws.

Campaign for State Misrepresentative

Councillor Reeves drew attention to shortcomings and ambiguity in the policies of the City regarding the use of public property for political campaigns. Undoubtedly the most disturbing of the events that precipitated this discussion was the ongoing series of political campaign events by State Misrepresentative candidate David Hoicka in Central Square. Applications for permits for these supposed "arts and performance" events made no mention whatsoever of the fact that their central theme was the promotion of candidates David Hoicka and Ralph Lopez. Political banners were attached to public art and utility poles during these events. City Manager Healy promised that if there was any misrepresentation then any future permits would be rescinded.

They were not, possibly due to unwillingness by the City to invite even more lawsuits by the ever-litigious Mr. Hoicka.

On a related note, Hoicka and Lopez repeated this same brand of fraud in a window display at the Cambridge Trust bank in Harvard Square. In that situation, they put up a display that was supposedly about "Social Justice" but which was in fact nothing more than a political advertisement. The display lasted the weekend before the bank, after numerous complaints, realized the deception and took down the display. Hoicka and Lopez are now publicly charging the bank with censorship. The Hoicka/Lopez campaign slogan should more properly be: "Vote for us or we'll sue you."

Complicating matters of the boundary between political free speech and inappropriate use of public property was the use of Danahy Park by the Anthony Galluccio campaign for a political rally. The difference there was that political slogans were restricted to T-shirts and signs carried by campaign supporters. Councillor Reeves went overboard in suggesting that "if 50 people can put on a T-shirt, then that's a sign." He's wrong. The more serious problem is that we may be unwittingly allowing a policy in which a candidate can stage political events using public resources by simply misrepresenting the event as something other than what it is and claiming that the campaign is simply "sponsoring" the event. This is what Hoicka is doing and I hope we'll not see it repeated in the future or passively allowed simply because of the failure to set a policy.

The vote on the Anderson petition

Though it happened in fits and starts as the Community Development Department (CDD) evaluated a set of proposed amendments for technical correctness and conformance with other goals and policies, the City Council did eventually pass a modified version of the Anderson petition. The proposed change to the Zoning Code would affect an area centered on Mass. Ave. between Inman St. and Ellery St. and contains several other provisions, most notably a weakening of the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and a citywide residential downzoning. The deliberations began with substitution of the Planning Board recommendations for the original petition. The most significant difference is that the Planning Board deleted all of the citywide aspects of the petition. Some of the amendments proposed at the meeting by the petitioners tried to put these citywide provisions back into the petition.

Acting CDD Director Beth Rubenstein impressed all with her concise point-by-point explanation of the appropriateness and effect of each of the 7 proposed amendments. Roger Herzog of CDD gave a convincing argument about why the petitioners' claims about the voluntary provisions of the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance were not realistic and flatly contradicted the scenarios that have been painted over the last several months by petitioner Robert LaTremouille.

The votes on the individual amendments were interesting. The Council voted 8-1 to include a provision prohibiting principal use parking garages in all residential zones. They voted 7-2 for additional yard requirements in the Res C-2B zone. The proposal to delete the voluntary provisions of the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance failed on a 3-6 vote with Councillors Davis, Sullivan, and Toomey voting in favor. The citywide residential downzoning provisions were also defeated on a 3-6 vote with Councillors Born, Davis, and Toomey voting in favor.

Easily the most curious of the amendments was the last one. This was a minor amendment that would have allowed some additional density for two properties on Clinton St., one being a building in which Alex Steinberg resides. Councillor Triantafillou boldly said, "I do want to make it clear though, if there's an amendment that involves benefiting our 'good friend' Mr. Steinberg, I will not be voting for that one." When the amendment came to a vote, she voted against it. The

amendment initially passed on a 5-3-1 vote (Born, Toomey, and Triantafillou opposed and Galluccio voting Present), but Councillor Reeves subsequently asked that his vote be changed. The amendment was then defeated on a 4-4-1 vote.

The most significant aspect of this is what it says about the ability of city councillors to vote impartially in matters of land use regulation. Here we have a councillor declaring that she will vote one way simply because of her personal feelings about one resident. This causes me to question not only the motivations of Councillor Triantafillou, but also what we might see should the IPOP petition prevail in which the City Council would have to approve every development project over 40,000 sq. ft. Why should anyone believe that objectivity will prevail when city councillors openly declare that their votes are dependent on which individuals might or might not benefit from their vote?

Once the votes on the amendments were done, the main motion came to a vote. There was some confusion as to how many votes were necessary to pass the zoning amendment. A two-thirds vote (6 votes) is required unless opposed by more than 20% of the affected area, in which case a three-quarter vote (7 votes) is needed.

The Anderson petition as filed had citywide implications and would have required 6 votes because less than 20% of the owners of the affected area had expressed opposition. When the Planning Board deleted the citywide provisions, the affected area became very small and, in fact, there was the necessary 20% opposition to force 7 votes. In the end, the single amendment that would prohibit principal use parking garages in all residential zones caused the proposed zoning change to have a citywide effect and the requirement went back down to 6 votes. Get it?

This suggests to me that if ever there are 6 councillors who want to pass a zoning amendment where there is greater than 20% opposition, they should have in their pocket a relatively inconsequential citywide zoning provision that can be tagged on in order to reduce a 7 vote petition to a 6 vote petition. In the end, the amended Anderson Petition passed 8-1 with Councillor Sullivan casting the lone dissenting vote.

No vote on rezoning of the Marino property

A vote was required at this meeting if a proposed zoning change for North Mass. Ave. was to be enacted. Councillor Russell opened the discussion by explaining how a compromise with the only affected property owner was in the works. She then moved to table the matter, a move that would effectively kill it. Normally a motion to table is not debatable, but Councillor Triantafillou was permitted to speak on the issue.

Councillor Triantafillou appealed to her fellow councillors to not table this matter since the matter was the subject of litigation and that inaction might result in a reversion of the zoning in the entire Trolley Square area to considerably higher density. Significant in her remarks was the following statement directed to several councillors: "You seem to be bending over backwards to protect one person and I don't understand it." This was an interesting remark in light of her earlier declaration that her vote on an amendment to the Anderson petition would be determined by how she felt about one individual who would be affected by the proposed change.

The matter was tabled. (Born, Reeves, and Triantafillou voting No)

The Gregory petition goes down to defeat

After months of damaging battle in Area 4 over whether or not to support the Gregory petition for the area near Broadway and Webster or to accept the package offered by the developers of the affected property, the City Council vote on the Gregory petition failed with 5 votes in favor (Born, Davis, Reeves, Triantafillou, and Duehay) and 4 votes opposed (Galluccio, Russell, Sullivan, and Toomey). The petition needed 7 votes to pass. There was no discussion. It will be

interesting to see if neighborhood activists on either side of this issue can get past it and work cooperatively for their mutual interests.

Tintinnabulation of the bells, bells, bells, bells, bells, bells, bells

After months of Council discussion about festivals, church bells, baklava, diversity, and tolerance, the proposed change to the Noise Ordinance that would exempt bells rung by churches and institutions came to a vote. Amendments to the proposal were passed to allow additional exemptions for bells during emergencies, holidays, and celebrations. Councillor Davis wanted to delay the vote until September, but her motion to table failed on a 4-5 vote. She then asked Councillor Russell to accept a friendly amendment to restrict the exemption to 9am to 9pm. This was not accepted. The main amendment then passed on a 5-4 vote with Galluccio, Reeves, Russell, Sullivan, and Toomey voting for the unrestricted exemption of these bells from the Noise Ordinance and with Born, Davis, Triantafillou, and Duehay voting against the unrestricted exemption. Councillor Davis announced her intention to file for Reconsideration of the vote.

In the wee hours

Late in this marathon meeting, the Council addressed a series of items and Councillor Toomey exercised his charter right to delay the rest to the September 14 Council meeting, including some significant items. In brief:

The Frankelton petition was passed to a 2nd reading. Now that the Planning Board recommendations have been forwarded to the Council, the matter could come to vote at the September 14 meeting.

The Hinds petition (IPOP) was passed to a 2nd reading. The Planning Board recommendations are still pending.

A request by the Gabrielli for Congress campaign to put up a sandwich board in front of their headquarters led to some awkward moments as several councillors pointedly asked to be recorded voting No. The matter was given to the City Manager to act with power - to determine the legal standing and to act on the request. Councillor Reeves recused himself from the vote because he is employed by the Gabrielli campaign.

Significant matters delayed to the Sept 14 meeting include a report from the Manager on the feasibility of establishing an Open Space Acquisition Fund and his response to an order from Councillor Toomey calling for the City to take the Com Energy site by eminent domain.

Scorecard: July 27 Council Orders

P (policy-related), **I** (requests for info), **R** (rules and procedural items), **M** (maintenance - potholes, traffic, etc.), **D** (deaths), **C** (congratulatory orders), **A** (announcements), and **F** (foreign and national policy).

Here's the approximate tally of orders introduced:

Councillor	P	I	R	M	D	C	A	F
Born	4	5	0	5	2	3	0	2
Davis	3	1	0	1	3	8	1	2
Duehay	3	1	0	0	2	2	0	2
Galluccio	9	1	0	15	41	15	0	0
Reeves	0	0	0	5	3	4	1	0
Russell	1	3	0	2	6	7	2	0
Sullivan	1	0	0	2	13	7	0	1
Toomey	3	2	0	1	21	4	2	1
Triantafillou	1	8	0	1	0	7	0	0
Total by category	20	18	0	30	43	47	5	4

As usual, death resolutions and congratulations were the rule, though policy-related orders and requests for information were much higher than usual. The 41 death resolutions from Councillor Galluccio have to be some kind of record. Another noteworthy order was from

Councillor Triantafillou who asked for information about how the Neville Manor Home Rule Petition was passed without a hearing or referral to the Health and Hospitals Committee. She missed all three Council meetings in June when this matter was the subject of extensive public comment and debate among her fellow councillors.

2) Sept 1 Planning Board meeting

I arrived at this meeting in time for the 2nd agenda item, a discussion of recent revisions to the University Park Master Plan. Though the plans are still evolving, I was pleasantly surprised to hear of plans by Forest City to replace some of its planned commercial uses by additional new housing units. The zoning changes approved by the City Council ten years ago mandated about 400 units of housing of which, I believe, 150 units were to be dedicated for low and moderate income families. The latest proposal would result in a total of 675 units. One potentially controversial aspect of the proposal is that the larger of the two new residential buildings would rise 20 stories with no plans for dedicating any units for low and moderate-income residents.

We also learned at this meeting that an agreement has been worked out with the new Star Market at University Park that would make parking for the supermarket free for the first 1½ hours. This was one of the stickier issues a few years ago when the City voted to grant various curb cuts and to discontinue Blanche Street in order to make way for the hotel and supermarket.

The next order of business at the meeting was a proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to protect backyard spaces by reducing the amount of residential expansion, by increasing rear yard setbacks, and by strengthening open space requirements. The proposal is rather technical in nature but seems to have succeeded in promoting most of the desirable effects without introducing too many hardships to current residential homeowners.

W.R Grace site zoning recommendations

In a truly shocking development, the Planning Board voted with very little discussion to unanimously approve zoning recommendations for the Industrial C District, better known as the W.R. Grace site. Some of the provisions are:

All basic development will be permitted as-of-right. That is, there will no longer be any special permit provisions that could result in additional density. However, construction in the flood plain will continue to need a Planning Board Special Permit and approval from the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission will continue to have wetlands jurisdiction.

A 25 ft. front yard at Alewife Brook Parkway and a 50 ft. setback from the Parkway for all buildings would be required. This provision may be problematic in that the peculiar geometry of the area between Jerry's Pond and the Parkway will make it very difficult to build the hotel that was proposed there.

A 25 ft. minimum yard abutting Russell Field and Linear Park would be required as well as a 50 ft. setback from parks for all buildings. This provision is also not being well received by the owners and developers of this property.

A 25 ft. front yard abutting Whittemore Ave. would be required. A 25 ft. minimum front yard abutting Rindge Ave. and a 50 ft. setback for all buildings would be required.

A maximum height of 55 feet would be established, except for a limited area around the MBTA headhouse in which the maximum height would be 70 feet.

The maximum gross floor area that would be allowed on the site would be 782,440 sq. ft. which amounts to an FAR of 0.65.

Parking limitations in the district would be such that under the current development proposals, there would be somewhere between 1.27

and 1.6 spaces per 1000 sq. ft. of floor area. The developers are quite adamant in their belief that this will not permit them to be competitive with other developments in the metropolitan area. A scenario has emerged in which the "highest and best use" of the site may be surface parking to augment the adjacent MBTA garage.

A minimum requirement of 20% Green or Publicly Beneficial Open Space would be established, not including Jerry's Pond.

Allowable uses would be office and R&D, residential, institutional, and selected retail up to a total of 25,000 sq. ft.

Building permits would require filing and approval of a Transportation Demand Management Plan with certain specific requirements.

It's hard to predict what will happen next. Some neighborhood activists are planning on making an alternate proposal with the belief that they can get the City Council to approve zoning amendments that lie somewhere in between the two proposals. The property owners still have a lawsuit pending against the City challenging the current building moratorium. This would seem to make yet another extension of the moratorium beyond the current September 30 expiration date unlikely, but stranger things have happened in Cambridge.

Though the issue of asbestos and toxic chemicals on the site is not strictly related to zoning, it may certainly serve as a convenient fly in the ointment. If the decision were mine, I'd vote this week in favor of the Planning Board recommendations with some minor amendments that take into account specific concerns of the property owners about setbacks and parking restrictions in selected parts of the site. If the City Council fails to approve some variant of the zoning proposal with at least 7 votes, the old zoning requirements will stand. Those standards allow for considerably more height and density than any of the proposals now on the table or near the table. Continued delay will only add to the likelihood that the current litigation will prevail.

Recommendations on the Frankelton petition

The last big item at this meeting was the Planning Board recommendations on the Frankelton petition for the corridor surrounding the Linear Park. The petition called for reducing the entire area to Res B, the same zoning as the surrounding neighborhoods. The problem with that is that it would seal in the existing commercial uses by eliminating all incentives to convert to residential use or more compatible non-residential uses.

The language of the Planning Board recommendations is annoyingly complicated and I won't repeat it here. The crux of the proposal, as I see it, is that on lots where commercial uses are eliminated in favor of residential uses, the allowable density will be comparable to the Res C1 zone common throughout much of Cambridge, with an FAR of 0.75. This is a reduction from the current potential density of 1.25 via Special Permit but is more than the proposed FAR of 0.5 associated with the Res B zone.

3) No Redeeming Value?

The Aug 21 issue of the *Boston Globe* had a story entitled "No Redeeming Value" about the new public area recycling barrels in Cambridge. This followed an article in July in the paper *Spare Change* that took issue with the fact that these barrels are locked. Their contention was that homeless people are dependent on these containers for necessary income. As a recycling advocate and as one of the people who applied the artwork to the barrels, these stories immediately drew my attention.

The reality is that only a small fraction, perhaps 20%, of the beverage containers that people put into the barrels are deposit containers. The principal purpose of these barrels is to maximize recycling of the non-deposit containers. Nonetheless, a few people started covering up the openings of some of the barrels, effectively

trashing 80% of their contents in order to obtain the 20% of returnables.

The locks on the barrels are there for several reasons. It is necessary to distinguish these barrels from ordinary trashcans. If the tops are left open, they will be treated as trashcans and DPW workers will be required to sort through the contents. There are also very real liability issues associated with allowing people to rummage through a barrel containing broken glass. There is also the problem of people emptying out the barrel's contents onto the sidewalk.

Some compromise may be possible - perhaps some sort of add-on for the exterior of the barrels in which people can leave returnables. This could have an additional benefit in that these same add-ons could be attached to ordinary trashcans elsewhere in the city. Thus we could turn a perceived loss of a marginal source of income into a benefit.

The greatest irony in this whole matter is that recycling advocates are being criticized for interfering with this very small income source. This ignores the much larger reality that the actions of these same recycling advocates led to tens of thousands of blue recycling bins lining every street of Cambridge and containing an enormous volume of returnables. Everyone in Cambridge knows the familiar sound of shopping carts rattling down the street on trash night.

Nonetheless, Globe reporter Abby Fung saw fit to include the following misleading sentence her article, "(Macy) DeLong, who estimates that there are 600 homeless people in Cambridge and up to 60 regulars in Harvard Square, likened the changes in the recycling bins to the City's 1991 anti-scavenging law, which empowers police to arrest homeless people who search for cans."

First, the 1991 anti-scavenging law was required by the State in order to qualify for the grant that provided all the recycling bins that were distributed at no cost to City residents. Second, the penalty for scavenging is a \$25 fine, not arrest. Third, in over 7 years not a single fine for scavenging has been issued by the City of Cambridge. They don't want to say it, but I will. Finally, the City never has nor will they ever pass an ordinance that applies only to homeless people.

Meetings between recycling officials and advocates for both recycling and the homeless are in the works.

4) Moving to Quabbin

Most Cambridge residents who were in town on August 3rd and for a few days afterwards are aware that something funny happened with their water. At long last, the big switch from Cambridge's own supply to the MWRA system occurred, making way for the water filtration and treatment facility at Fresh Pond to be reconstructed. We will be on MWRA water for 2 1/2 years, though it wouldn't surprise me if they finished earlier than that. If you've been by Fresh Pond lately, you know that the demolition is well underway.

To understand why the water was so dreadful looking for those few days, you have to understand a few things about the distribution system. Normally, the entire system branches out at the Cambridge Common into the various mains that serve different sections of the city. The water normally flows in one direction. For the next 2 1/2 years, MWRA water will enter our distribution system at three locations - the brick structure on the Common, in an alley off Norfolk St. near Sennott Park, and at the Porter Square commuter rail station. The relative proportions are about 12:5:1. The flow of water will be reversed in some locations and at different times, depending on relative demand from various parts of the city. When flow is reversed there is often increased turbidity, sometimes dramatically so.

According to information from the Cambridge Water Department (CWD), differences in the old and new supplies will mean that the background or base color of the water will be higher than that of

Cambridge water and will be about ten degrees cooler. The MWRA supply, principally coming from the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs, is a typical New England soft surface water supply. Although it is not filtered the water quality characteristics are similar to that of the Cambridge water supply.

The MWRA uses the same chlorination method as Cambridge and recently implemented the same corrosion control strategy as that used by Cambridge, raising the pH to 9 and raising the alkalinity to 30 mg/l.

For further information, please call Timothy MacDonald, Manager of Water Operations at 349-4773.

Calendar:

Mon, Sept 14

5:30pm Regular **City Council** meeting. (Sullivan Chamber)

Tues, Sept 15 Primary Election Day

Wed, Sept 16

5:30pm - 7:30pm **Bicycle Committee** City Hall Annex; 57 Inman Street; 3rd Floor Contact: Cara Seiderman; 349-4629; cseiderman@ci.cambridge.ma.us

5:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public meeting to continue to discuss a proposed amendment to the Municipal Code entitled "Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance. (Sullivan Chamber)

6:00pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss a recommendation from the Historical Commission on its revised Final Report on the proposed Arsenal Square Extension of the Old Cambridge Historic District and/or the proposed Landmark Designation of 22, 24 and 26-28 Garden Street. (Sullivan Chamber)

6:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss a proposed zoning petition affecting several lots at Churchill and Clarendon Avenue, received from the Planning Board. (Sullivan Chamber)

Wed, Sept 23

7:00pm - **Lafayette Square Advisory Committee** 51 Inman Street; 2nd Floor Conference Room Contact: Rosalie Anders; 349-4604; randers@ci.cambridge.ma.us

Thurs, Sept 24

6:00pm - 8:00pm **Pedestrian Committee** City Hall Annex 57 Inman Street; 3rd Floor Contact: Rosalie Anders; 349-4604; randers@ci.cambridge.ma.us

Mon, Sept 28

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

Mon, Oct 5

5:30pm Regular **City Council** Meeting (Sullivan Chamber)

The Cambridge Civic Journal is produced by Central Sq. Publications, 366 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139. All items written by Robert Winters unless otherwise noted. (e-mail: rwinters@math.harvard.edu)