
Cambridge Civic Journal

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THE LONG OVERDUE ISSUE

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0) Foreword

Though I had planned to get this issue out several weeks ago, the business of review sessions, writing and grading final exams, assigning course grades, and getting ready for the spring semester at Harvard took precedence. It was a pretty exciting month on the civic front with several major zoning petitions being resolved and plenty of controversy generated regarding a number of discrimination complaints against the City. This Journal managed to get some attention from the press in mid-January in the form of an article by Jason Gay in the Boston Phoenix entitled "Net Effect." You can check it out at <http://www.bostonphoenix.com/archive/features/99/01/21/CAMBRIDGE.html>

I inadvertently referred in the last issue of the Civic Journal to a report from the Neville Manor Site Advisory Committee as coming from the Fresh Pond Master Plan Advisory Committee. The two groups are certainly not the same and their recommendations can be at times very, very different.

With each meeting of the City Council the fact that this is an election year becomes more apparent. I admit to being unable to hazard a good guess as to what the big issues may turn out to be as the year progresses. There is certainly the ever present "growth management" lobby that focuses on zoning issues. There is a cluster of people and groups that wish to elevate "race and class" into most prominent status. Affordable housing groups are still active but seem mainly involved in practical matters of crisis intervention rather than in any cohesive form of political organizing. It is already quite clear that some would like very much to make the future of the City Manager into a central issue.

Nobody has yet heard a peep from either the Cambridge Civic Association or the Cambridge Alliance (Independents), traditionally the two sides of the Cambridge political coin. I regret this very much. Despite the history of these groups advocating for pet issues such as rent control (CCA) or property rights (Alliance), there was the notion that these were "general" civic entities which could focus on a wide range of issues affecting the City of Cambridge. What I see now is a smattering of groups advocating for relatively narrow interests.

Decades ago it would not have surprised anyone to have a civic group come out with reports, studies, broad proposals, and initiatives. The main stuff of civic action these days is the zoning petition. Why isn't a proposal like "A Plan for our Schools" at the center of civic debate? Why can't we get more than a handful of familiar faces to show up at budget hearings? Maybe we're all just too busy paying our bills, planning our vacations, and living our lives.

1) Jan7 Special City Council meeting - Grace and Vendetti

In order to provide time for debate and public comment on three major zoning petitions, Mayor Duehay called this Special City Council Meeting with a limited agenda. The three agenda items were the disposition of the Planning Board and von Grossman petitions for the future zoning of the WR Grace site and the Vendetti petition to rezone the ComEnergy site in East Cambridge as Open Space. Though both Grace petitions called for dramatically reducing the allowable density, the von Grossman petition was the more restrictive. It called for an effective FAR of 0.45 (as opposed to 0.65 with the Planning Board proposal) and requirements for "view corridors" that some have argued would render much of the parcel unbuildable.

The fervor shown in some of the public comment was apparent. In North Cambridge, this meeting was advertised via a flier entitled "Neighborhood Safety Update" which warned that the Planning Board proposal would a) expose neighbors, workers, and children to asbestos; b) worsen traffic; c) worsen flooding; and d) cause wet basements. The "Are you afraid of asbestos?" tactic as well as the opening of the film "A Civil Action" contributed to the rancorous tone of the meeting.

Though the meeting started at 4pm, the Council immediately went into executive session to discuss some of the legal implications associated with these petitions. The issues of "regulatory takings" and an existing lawsuit by WR Grace over a building moratorium were central issues that the Council had to consider.

During public comment it was clear that von Grossman proponents from North Cambridge and Vendetti proponents from East Cambridge were doing their best to come across as a unified coalition. Each speaker would voice their support for the other petition before testifying in favor of the one that they were really there to support. Prominent themes in the public comment were:

- Grace site is unique due to concerns about flooding, contamination, and traffic.
- People are worried about flooded basements.
- Need for clean, green open spaces and neighborhood protection.
- Concerns about cut-through traffic caused by proposed developments.
- Asbestos, asbestos, asbestos.
- Quality of life, public health, safety.
- Developments will force people out who cannot afford to live here.
- Third Street is already too busy, too dangerous.
- Children will no longer be able to play in the streets of E. Cambridge.
- The Alewife area already has enough hotels.
- Proposal for exemption to Interim Planning Overlay (IPOP) for Grace will lead to other exemptions.
- Recreate the Mystic River Basin and the Great Alewife Swamp.
- If anything is built, jobs should go to Cambridge residents.
- Think of people, not just the bottom line.
- Grace needs to have consequences for its actions.
- My back yard is filled with carcinogens. There is no way to buy this child bottled air, to put her in a cage. We do not trust Grace.
- There's a severe shortage of open space in East Cambridge.

We are not hysteric paranoids as we were characterized by your Chief Executive.

Reengage in sensibility. Encourage open space, public buildings, and mixed use at ComEnergy site. New populations that will be introduced should have an opportunity to live near work, not commuters.

I don't want to see the Council portrayed in theaters in a sequel to "A Civil Action."

Grace should donate the site for \$1 as a monument to greed.

Vendetti Petition does not provide usable open space. This is a petition against a particular site. It will only preserve a parking lot. "Open space" is hollow if not used, maintained, and programmed.

Vendetti Petition will inhibit the ability to clean up ComEnergy site. I would love to see some of the linkage fees redirected toward open space.

In addition to the speakers, there was a communication from Larissa Brown comparing the Planning Board and von Grossman petitions and which focused on opportunities rather than perceived threats.

First, the von Grossman Petition

Councillor Born expressed her desire to mix and match the preferred aspects of both Grace petitions. There were procedural issues related to the "fundamental character must be preserved" requirement for dealing with zoning petitions without requiring additional legal advertisements and public hearings. Deputy City Solicitor Don Drisdell recommended choosing one petition as a starting point and amending from there.

Treading dangerously close to speaking directly to legal matters discussed in Executive Session, Councillor Galluccio pressed the issue of "takings" in the context of the zoning petitions at hand. Mr. Drisdell elaborated on a shift over the last 10 to 15 years in the analysis in the federal courts on land use regulation and the question of when zoning laws go so far as to impose economic burdens. He also spoke about the requirement that zoning be done in a uniform manner, i.e. the need to avoid spot zoning.

Councillor Reeves was the first to turn the evening into a populist referendum when he said that he wasn't interested in hearing the Planning Board report if they were not going to hear the "neighborhood report." [One must wonder how Councillor Reeves views public comment at these meetings if he feels this does not constitute a "neighborhood report."] He characterized the debate as "tap dancing" as he advocated for approval of the most restrictive zoning or for taking land by eminent domain. He lumped together zoning matters and delays in the siting of a new library and police station as he ripped into the City Manager and called for the election of different councillors who would join him in ousting the Manager.

In response to questioning by Councillor Born, City Manager Healy and Mr. Drisdell discussed the problematic requirement in the von Grossman petition that the City assume responsibility for monitoring contaminants during any excavation or construction. This authority rests with Mass. Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) according to state law.

Cambridge Conservation Commission Director Julia Bowdoin explained the differences between the 100 year and 500 year flood plain designations and the different regulatory requirements that affect each area. Possible benefits of regulating within the 500 year flood plain are unlikely to outweigh the costs, so most regulation applies only to the 100 year flood plain. Ms. Bowdoin further said that the actual causes of flooding in the Alewife area need to be better understood. [The principal cause may have more to do with inadequate engineering than inadequate flood storage.]

Councillor Born took issue with the relevance of "view corridors" in the VG petition. She described this as a disingenuous way to prevent development. She remarked that planting evergreen trees could block these views as effectively as buildings.

Councillor Davis' focus was on making the area a benefit to the community rather than the derelict area that much of it is today. She saw the existence of a hotel adjacent to the T headhouse as a positive benefit that would provide additional safety. CDD Acting Director Beth Rubenstein added that a hotel was less of a traffic generator than either office or retail. Councillor Davis further commented that a hotel operator would have a strong incentive to ensure that the environs of Jerry's Pond be better maintained.

Councillor Triantafillou made the most direct pitch to the crowd as she informed them that the VG petition was about to go down to defeat. While thanking the crowd for their efforts and jabbing at Councillors Davis and Born for their remarks about hotels and view corridors, she mirrored Councillor Reeves' remarks about changing the government.

Councillor Sullivan put things in perspective when he stated that under the Planning Board's proposal there would still be a two-thirds reduction in development potential at the Grace site and that this would be the lowest density commercial zoning anywhere in the city. He added that it would also not cost the City anything in court.

After Councillor Born introduced a series of amendments to the VG petition and Councillor Galluccio gave a wordy explanation of why he was about to vote the way he was, the VG petition was defeated with only four votes in favor (Born, Reeves, Toomey, and Triantafillou).

Next, the Planning Board Petition

After Les Barber of CDD explained the differences between the Planning Board and von Grossman petitions, including the controversial recommendation to grant an exemption to the IPOP, Councillor Born moved that the IPOP exemption be eliminated. The motion passed 5-4 with Councillors Born, Davis, Reeves, Toomey, and Triantafillou voting in favor.

Councillor Galluccio walked a fine political line in proposing that a supermarket use be added to the permitted uses. With Councillor Reeves questioning whether this was realistic, the motion was adopted. After a Triantafillou motion to restrict certain traffic movements failed, Councillor Sullivan moved to reconsider the earlier vote on the IPOP exemption. After some questions about parliamentary procedure, the IPOP exemption was restored on a voice vote. The Planning Board petition was then approved unanimously and the Grace site rezoned.

Finally, the Vendetti Petition

It was clear from the start that the Vendetti Petition to rezone the ComEnergy site as Open Space had little chance of passing, so the fact that it never came to a vote was no surprise. Councillors Toomey and Born instead moved to substitute an alternate proposal that would mandate 50% open space in the affected district of which 75% of this would have to be for active recreational uses. While Councillor Toomey suggested impropriety on the part of City administration, Councillor Born chose to characterize their new proposal as a way to create a 4-5 acre park at no cost to the City. She suggested a public-private partnership that might result in a big skating rink, a big swimming pool, or a big playing field at this site.

Mr. Drisdell made very clear that he felt that the new proposal was fundamentally different than the Vendetti Petition and that the matter would have to be readvertised and that new hearings would have to be held. This led to a heated exchange with Councillor Toomey in which he questioned Mr. Drisdell's trustworthiness. A more cool-headed Councillor Born acknowledged Mr. Drisdell's objections and conceded that the proposal would have to be filed as a new petition.

The closing minutes of the meeting featured an exchange during which Councillor Galluccio accused Councillor Toomey of trying to alienate his colleagues. Waxing poetic, he stated, "You're on a boat and if you want the captain of that boat to go to a particular island and he's the only captain of the boat, you don't put a gun to the captain's head. Every time we have this discussion, you pull out that gun. And I would suggest to you in the matter of safe sailing and getting to the island that your constituents want, that there's a way of doing business and a way of treating your colleagues and there's a way of working with people that you don't support. I respect your position with respect to the Manager. I don't respect the repeated and prolonged browbeating that goes on."

Councillor Toomey countered, "I don't make decisions for what the people of East Cambridge want. I listen. This [the ComEnergy site] is the spot they have identified. I believe in smooth sailing. I have never browbeaten my colleagues. We haven't been thrown a life raft from this administration."

Mayor Duchay wisely adjourned the meeting at this point, asserting that they were all working for open space in East Cambridge.

2) Jan 11 City Council meeting

One of the controversies brewing in the days leading up to this meeting was the proposal from the Government Operations Committee to change the Council rules for the purpose of making these meetings more efficient and effective. The word on the street was that citizens would only be able to give public comment once per month, though the actual proposal called for restricting only irrelevant comment in the sense of matters not currently before the Council.

A practice that has developed in recent years is that of sending in a letter to the City Council on whatever topic you wished to address, thus putting this under the Consent Communications section of the Council meeting. This would give license to anyone to speak on, as Councillor Sullivan put it, "the ozone, seven stars, suns, and everything else." This has become not only an embarrassment but also a source of frustration for councillors and city officials. Nonetheless, Elie Yardin characterized the proposal as "a nonsensical piece of scapegoating." Other critics included Stash Horowitz, Ian MacKinnon, Vince Dixon, and Marty Connor.

There was an interesting exchange between the City Manager and Councillor Reeves on the matter of qualifications to become a police officer. Former Police Commissioner Perry Anderson had taken a rigid view on the question of whether a relatively minor police record should disqualify a candidate. Decisions from the Civil Service Commission have not supported this level of rigidity and current Police Commissioner Ronnie Watson has adopted a policy that takes into account the nature and recentness of past offenses. The possibility of subjective judgment in such matters was troubling to Reeves as he intimated that different standards might exist based on race.

While the Council was discussing the inadequacy of some public meeting spaces, especially those used by the Planning Board and License Commission, Councillor Born offered a very interesting proposal. She noted that historically City Hall once had two chambers, one for the City Council and one for the Board of Alderman. The other chamber was walled over and floored over after the City Charter was changed and the Board of Alderman abolished. She suggested that restoration of this room with its tall ceilings and windows would add a sense of dignity to these public functions. The down side of the proposal is that it would require the relocation of the offices currently occupying that space.

Councillors Born and Toomey introduced a revised zoning petition to replace the Vendetti Petition that would soon expire. This proposal

would mandate 50% open space in the area of the ComEnergy site of which 75% of that must be for active recreational uses. It also would put limits on construction below the existing grade, including parking structures, and would reduce the floor-to-area ratio (FAR) from 3 to 2. Councillor Triantafillou used this opportunity to declare that she would have voted for the Vendetti Petition which would have zoned this entire parcel adjacent to the Kendall Square T station as open space. This is noteworthy in that most planners recommend concentrating development close to public transit for reasons of environmental protection and efficient use of resources.

The subject of open space again came up with yet another proposal that the City acquire the LinPro site at 210 Broadway for open space. This was part of the area that would have been rezoned had the Gregory petition prevailed last year. Further up Broadway, the notion that the City take the Squirrel Brand property by eminent domain (the site of the Broadway and Boardman Community Garden) was the subject of a Council Order introduced by Councillor Triantafillou. The gardeners have been able to use this land for 20 years thanks to the generosity of the owners. The gardeners want very much to keep this property as a garden, but a number of them have very eloquently expressed their reluctance to engage in any action inconsistent with the generosity that has been shown to them over the years.

The Council did vote to change some of its rules. Scheduled special events will now take place at 5pm, prior to the 5:30pm start of the regular meeting. Councillors will be required to submit Orders by 3pm Thursday for the following Monday's Council meeting, a proposal that caused Councillor Reeves to rather unfairly criticize the City Clerk and Deputy City Clerk. Councillor Triantafillou wisely intimated that the Council now files too many Orders and that they should consider filing them electronically. [I emphatically agree.]

The Council voted to move the Unfinished Business portion of the meeting to immediately after the City Manager's Agenda. This was done in order to ensure that City staff was on hand when some of these important matters came up and to increase the likelihood that zoning petitions and other highly detailed matters are not taken up when everyone is exhausted. The matter of changing the rules regarding public comment was tabled in order for the Government Operations and Rules Committees to further refine the proposal.

The closing moments of the meeting featured personal accounts from all nine councillors in recognition of retiring Captain Henry "Buzzy" Breen of the Cambridge Police Department.

3) Jan 25 City Council meeting

A public hearing to receive a report on race and class derived from a public forum held on October 22 was a principal feature of this evening. The meeting was laced with several other controversial topics, including the announcement that an arrangement to preserve affordable units at 929 Mass. Ave., an expiring use building, had fallen through.

Public comment

Gerry Bergmann, formerly associated with food pantry programs when employed by CEOC, alienated councillors and city officials alike when he pointed accusing fingers at Councillors Reeves, Galluccio, and Born for the Food Policy Committee not meeting for the last several years. He tried to link this to current "race and class" issues. Councillor Reeves countered his remarks by effectively blaming Bergmann for inadequacies in feeding programs during his time at CEOC. Councillor Born followed by detailing all of the improvements that have been made in response to City Council action. Elaine DeRosa of CEOC stepped up to the microphone later to make clear that food is available for anyone who needs it and invited anyone to call CEOC at 868-2900 to learn more.

After Mr. William Jones announced that City Foods in Central Square had abruptly closed that morning, several councillors jumped on the issue. They spoke of potential legal action and encouraging other food stores to provide shuttles. [The Purity Supreme that used to be at that site was never particularly profitable. When the new Star Market went in at University Park, I knew the days of City Foods were numbered. Council action cannot trump basic economics.]

The news that the agreement between the City and the new owners of the expiring use building at 929 Mass. Ave. had come undone led to a series of tenants from that building asking for and getting a public hearing scheduled on this matter. [This hearing occurred on Feb 8 and will be described in the next issue of the CCJ.]

Presentation of the Report on Race and Class

A summary of the report was presented by Denise Simmons of the Cambridge School Committee, Cathy Hoffman of the Peace Commission, and Susan Ostrander of the Human Rights Commission. Ms. Simmons opened with some history of Cambridge's Civic Unity Committee which she once chaired. A principal theme was of how many of the observations and recommendations made fifty years ago were still applicable today. I had to note the mismatch of these observations with the title of the forum and report: "The Trouble I've Seen: Cambridge begins the difficult discussion on race and class." Clearly this discussion has been going on in one form or another for a very long time.

The four categories of recommendations are in city accountability, housing, work, and the schools and reflect the sentiments of those who attended the Oct 22 forum. The report contains some good ideas, but reads more like a brainstorming session than a fully developed report or plan of action. Copies of the 10-page report and an appendix are available from the Cambridge Peace Commission.

After the presentations and public comment, Mayor Duehay offered some perspectives on the scope of the problem. He stressed the need to "widen the circle so that we will not just be talking to ourselves." He spoke of leading others gently to the table and took note of the fact that there are some who would prefer to push people toward the table. He stressed that the outcome must be active recommendations and placed housing as the top priority.

Councillor Russell emphasized the need to reach people who don't generally participate in these kinds of discussions. She spoke of the perception that the people who are the most active are the ones who get most of the resources through the schools. She made a point of noting that some of the recommendations in the report were politically motivated. Councillors Davis, Galluccio, and Born contributed their remarks on the report, but the sparks really flew when Councillors Reeves and Triantafillou had their turn.

Councillor Reeves spoke directly to discrimination complaints and lawsuits brought by City employees. He presumed guilt on all counts and even resorted to profanity in his criticism of the City Manager. He stated directly that only those who would vote to change the city management are "the colored people's friend."

Councillor Triantafillou expressed outrage at a letter from an attorney hired by the City that recommended that city councillors not comment directly on the complaints filed by city personnel. [This is in accordance with the City Charter that makes direct interference in personnel matters a felony.] She expressed embarrassment at having to explain this to people and said, "I don't want more dialogue. Spend money on mediators. Pay these judgements." Regarding the City Manager, she said, "He has to change. If he cannot change, then he must go. The City is under siege with lawsuits, but we continue to hire the same CEO. The only heads that roll are the lower heads."

Denise Simmons made some final remarks and Councillor Sullivan moved that the recommendations be referred to a "gold ribbon committee" to be appointed by Mayor Duehay and Councillor Triantafillou, chair of the Council's Civil and Human Rights Committee.

My final comment on the hearing is how disappointing it was that Councillors Reeves and Triantafillou chose to distract from the topics at hand in order to "go postal" on the City Manager knowing full well that he would not be able to comment directly on personnel matters.

Highlights and Lowlights from the Manager's Agenda

Councillor Reeves took issue with a report from the City Manager on the racial composition of recent police recruit classes. The 1998 class consisted of 19 total new officers, including 13 whites, 1 African-American, and 5 Hispanic candidates or 31.6% minority. In the period from 1995 through 1997, the combined classes were 52.9% minority.

Councillor Reeves seemed concerned by the low number of African-American recruits among the minority recruits. This caused Mr. Healy to remark, "Are we going to go into subsets?" He explained that the state Department of Personnel Administration certifies not by African-American status but by minority status and that "there's not one thing that the City can do about it" according to civil service regulations.

A report on bicycle courier regulations inspired Councillors Born, Russell, Davis, and Galluccio to speak on the matter. It was Councillor Triantafillou who made clear that regulating bicycle couriers was not high on her list of priorities. [The probability of a pedestrian being seriously hurt by a bicyclist is so much lower than that of being hurt by an automobile driver that one has to marvel at how much attention is paid to this issue. Not to let reckless bicyclists off the hook, but even the celebrated collision in Boston that did serious injury to Boston School Committee member William Spring was largely the fault of the pedestrian in that case.]

A report from the City Manager on how much money is being spent defending the City in the aforementioned complaints led to a tense interchange between Reeves and Mr. Healy. The Manager made the point that the defendants in these complaints are hard-working, conscientious City employees. He said, "You don't just sell them out because someone has made claims."

When Reeves complained of a department head refusing to meet with him and an employee with a complaint, Mr. Healy had to explain that it was the City Charter that prevented the department head from having such contact. This did not seem to satisfy Councillor Reeves, who said, "This is a person who says they're discriminated against. Who works for who here?" Mr. Healy, in response to an inquiry from Councillor Reeves, said that there was a total of two other MCAD complaints of which he knew. He emphasized that it does occasionally happen that a dissatisfied employee will file an MCAD complaint after exhausting all other options.

The Rest of the Meeting

A report from the Finance Committee concerning possible open space acquisition in East Cambridge focused primarily on the possibility of land purchases on and discontinuance of a portion of Fulkerson Street. The report gave some of the financial basis for why taking the ComEnergy site for this purpose was not recommended. Total costs were estimated at between 52 and 80 million dollars.

One of the most significant items on the agenda was relative to the Cambridgeport Roadways Plan. Discussion of the matter was delayed by charter right to the Feb 1 Council meeting. The plan requires appropriations, land takings, layout of the roadway, discontinuance of portions of roadways, and conveyance of property. The principal purpose of the plan is move traffic from University Park to the BU

Bridge, Memorial Drive, and the Mass Pike so as to minimize traffic on residential streets.

4) Feb 1 City Council meeting

A sad note marked the start of this meeting with the announcement of two deaths during the previous week - Louis Leahy, father of City Councillor Kathleen Leahy Born; and former City Councillor William G. Maher, father of School Committee member David Maher.

Topics discussed during the public comment period were:

The Jelley Petition to downzone the area bounded by Putnam Ave, River St., Blackstone St., and Western Ave. from Office 3 to Res C1
The Cambridgeport Roadways Plan

Backyard/Greenspace zoning proposal

Lori Berenson, former Cambridge resident now in a Peruvian prison
Polaroid, asphalt, zinc, asbestos, and parking freeze. [Guess who?]

Rising rents at Clinton and Prospect Streets.

The Frankelton II Petition for the Linear Park corridor in North Cambridge.

The proposed Newsrack Ordinance.

In light of the fact that so many who give public comment do not respect time limits or the signal marking the expiration of the allotted time, it was noteworthy that Craig Kelley actually stopped in the middle of a sentence when his time had expired. This caused Mayor Duehay to remark, "Nobody has ever done that!"

Cambridgeport Roadways Plan

Acting CDD Director Beth Rubenstein gave an historical and design presentation of the proposed plan to better move the traffic that will be generated with the full buildout of University Park. Councillor Davis dominated the questioning, especially in the matter of possible cut-through traffic on the residential streets of Cambridgeport.

In response to Councillor Davis' questions, Ms. Rubenstein described a significant list of other measures that would be undertaken to minimize negative traffic impacts on these residential streets. These measures involved significant truck restrictions, prohibitions on right turns on red on north-south roads in Cambridgeport, changes in signal timing, and improved traffic flow on Memorial Drive.

The principal feature of the plan involves continuing Sidney Street and Waverly Street to connect to a new road near the BU Bridge rotary. The plan is the result of several years of effort by a committee of residents and city staff. Costs for the project are to be borne by MIT, the developers of University Park, and the City, whose share (about \$2 million) will mainly come from state and federal funds. The Council voted unanimously in favor of all matters related to the plan.

Housing Impact Reports from Harvard and MIT

Here are the numbers of Harvard, MIT, and Lesley College students who were living in Cambridge in Spring 1998:

	Harvard	MIT	Lesley	Total
Undergrads in dorms	6403	3223	350	9976
Grads in dorms	1500	1517	0	3017
Undergrads in affiliate housing	160	14	0	174
Grads in affiliate housing	1300	215	0	1515
Undergrads off-campus	60	165	66	291
Grads off-campus	3000	1325	149	4474

MIT reported an additional 979 undergraduates and 2294 graduate students living outside of Cambridge. Harvard reported that fewer than 1% of its undergraduate students elect to live off-campus in non-Harvard housing. Among the 7835 Harvard graduate students, 62% are

not housed by the university and more than half of them live outside of Cambridge.

These reports were referred to the City Council's Housing and Community Development Committee. Discussion of Harvard's Housing Impact Statement is scheduled for Mar 2. The committee will discuss MIT's Housing Impact Statement on Mar 11.

The Rest of the Meeting

There was a very interesting roll call vote on an Order filed by Councillor Reeves questioning the extension of the contract of Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi. Only Councillors Reeves, Toomey, and Triantafillou supported the motion. Councillors Galluccio, Russell, Sullivan, Davis, and Mayor Duehay opposed it, and Councillor Born was absent.

Another interesting roll call vote was on an order calling for the drafting of a home rule petition to lower the voting age for municipal elections to age 16. Councillors Davis, Galluccio, Reeves, and Mayor Duehay supported it; Councillors Russell, Sullivan, Toomey, and Triantafillou opposed it; and Councillor Born was recorded as absent. [For what it's worth, I would have voted against this. I see no reason for Cambridge to be any different than the rest of the state and the country on something so fundamental as voting age.]

Other items of some significance either discussed or reported at this meeting were:

- The appointment of 17 persons to the recently established Green Ribbon Open Space Committee.
- Notification of the fact that proceedings of Planning Board meetings will be recorded by stenographer beginning in March.
- Release of the 1999 Cambridge Public Health Assessment
- Release of Cambridge's FY98 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report
- A report on the sudden closing of City Foods in Central Square
- A report relative to the City administration's goals for FY2000
- A report from the Health and Hospitals Committee relative to recommendations from the Neville Manor Site Plan Advisory Committee

Scorecard: Jan 7, 11, 25, and Feb 1 City 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	1	7	0	1	1	5	0	1
Davis	2	4	1	2	0	10	1	0
Duehay	1	1	0	0	2	12	2	0
Galluccio	6	5	0	4	53	19	1	0
Reeves	8	6	0	3	5	16	5	0
Russell	5	2	0	3	9	7	1	0
Sullivan	3	3	0	2	25	12	0	0
Toomey	3	2	2	2	20	8	0	0
Triantafillou	2	2	0	0	0	2	1	1
Total by category	27	32	3	16	62	69	11	1

5) Civic Tidbits

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court struck down Boston's condominium conversion ordinance. The Ordinance Committee of the Cambridge City Council has held a similar proposal for Cambridge in committee pending the resolution of this court case.

The process of reshaping the proposed Cambridge Research Park that will occupy the former ComEnergy site in Kendall Square is proceeding along with additional meetings at the Planning Board. The latest proposal incorporates a public ice-skating rink into the site plan and extends the Broad Canal water feature Third Street. There are 450 fewer parking spaces than in their earlier proposal. A final decision by the Planning Board is expected on or about April 6. In the meantime, there is the pending zoning proposal introduced by Councillors Toomey and Born at the Jan 11 City Council meeting.

Calendar:

Tues, Feb 16

- 6:00pm **School Committee** meeting (Media Cafeteria, CRLS)
 7:30pm **Planning Board** meeting. Agenda includes a public hearing on issues related to Cambridge Research Park proposal for the former ComEnergy site in Kendall Square. (Kennedy School, East Cambridge)

Wed, Feb 17

- 5:30pm **Election Commission** meeting (362 Green St.)

Thurs, Feb 18

- 6:00pm **Harvard Square Advisory Committee** (City Hall Annex, 57 Inman St., 1st Floor Conference Room)
 7:00pm Monthly meeting of the **Porter Square Neighbors Association** (Metropolitan Baptist Church, 16 Beech Street)

Mon, Feb 22

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

Tues, Feb 23

- 3:00pm Meeting of the City Council's **Deliberation and Policy Task Force**. (Ackermann Room)
 6:00pm **School Committee** meeting (Media Cafeteria, CRLS)
 7:00pm **Mid-Cambridge meeting** with Neighborhood Sergeant Joe Wilson, featuring information about the Cambridge Dispute Settlement center, responsibilities of Internal Affairs, and the latest neighborhood crime statistics. (Longfellow School, 359 Broadway)

Wed, Feb 24

- 5:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss the proposed zoning amendment submitted by the City Council to change provisions of PUD-3 to increase open space for publicly active recreational use. (Sullivan Chamber)
 5:30pm **Harvard Square Historic District Study Committee** meeting (BankBoston, 1414 Mass. Ave., 5th floor)

Thurs, Feb 25

- 5:30pm-7:30pm Public reception for the "Black Art/American Art" exhibit on the 2nd floor of City Hall. Sponsored by Mayor Duehay, the City of Cambridge, the City Employees' Committee on Diversity, and the Cambridge Arts Council. (City Hall)
 6:00pm **Pedestrian Committee** meeting (City Hall Annex)

Mon, Mar 1

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

Tues, Mar 2

- 5:30pm The **Housing and Community Development Committee** will hold a public meeting to discuss Harvard's Housing Impact Statement. (Sullivan Chamber)
 6:00pm **School Committee** meeting. Agenda includes a public hearing on attendance policy issues. (Media Cafeteria, CRLS)
 7:30pm **Planning Board** meeting, including discussion of Cambridge Research Park. (City Hall Annex)

Wed, Mar 3

- 5:30pm The **Traffic and Transportation Committee** will conduct a public hearing to review the draft of the pedestrian plan. (Sullivan Chamber)
 5:30pm **Election Commission** meeting (362 Green St.)

Tues, Mar 9

- 3:00pm Meeting of the City Council's **Deliberation and Policy Task Force**. (Ackermann Room)

Wed, Mar 10

- 5:30pm **Harvard Square Historic District Study Committee** meeting (BankBoston, 1414 Mass. Ave., 5th floor)

Thurs, Mar 11

- 5:30pm The **Housing and Community Development Committee** will hold a public meeting to discuss MIT's Housing Impact Statement. (Sullivan Chamber)

Mon, Mar 15

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

Tues, Mar 16

- 7:30pm **Planning Board** meeting, including discussion of Cambridge Research Park. (City Hall Annex)

Thurs, Mar 18

- 5:30pm The **Traffic and Transportation Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss traffic calming night-time truck ban and to wrap up the truck reports. (Sullivan Chamber)

Mon, Mar 22

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

Mon, Mar 23

- 5:30pm Meeting of the City Council's **Deliberation and Policy Task Force**. (Ackermann Room)

Wed, Mar 24

- 5:30pm **Harvard Square Historic District Study Committee** meeting (BankBoston, 1414 Mass. Ave., 5th floor)

Wed, Mar 25

- 5:30pm The **Traffic and Transportation Committee** will conduct a public meeting to receive an update on University Place. (Sullivan Chamber)

Tues, Mar 30

- 7:30pm **Planning Board** special meeting on Cambridge Research Park. (tentatively at City Hall Annex)

Tues, Apr 6

- 7:30pm **Planning Board** meeting, including possible final decision on Cambridge Research Park. (tentatively at City Hall Annex)