
Cambridge Civic Journal

Issue 19

6 Sept 1999

LABOR DAY ISSUE

The *Cambridge Civic Journal* is produced by Central Square Publications, 366 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139. Articles and comments may be submitted to Editor@rwinters.com .

Cambridge Civic Journal:

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

Cambridge Civic Calendar:

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0) Foreword

It's been a four month summer hiatus for the Cambridge Civic Journal and a lot has happened on the civic front and on the personal front. I've managed to attend to the CCJ web site with some regularity, small consolation to those who have yet to venture out from the convenience of e-mail to the potential of the Wonderful World Wide Web. I'll try very hard in the future to attend to both and to those who receive print copies in the mail. More frequent issues will be the goal in the future.

With political matters on the near horizon, I am eager to have others step up and help out with the CCJ over the next several months and beyond. This has been a personal labor of love for the city in which I've lived for the last 21 years, but it would be easier for me and better for everyone if a team of contributors could be assembled. I see the CCJ as an evolving experiment. The Civic Calendar, Zoning Petition Timetable (Henrietta Davis' idea), the CCA News, community alerts, and compact guides published in advance of every City Council meeting at the CCJ web site are examples of this ongoing experiment. The possibilities can only grow and improve with more contributors of ideas and articles.

Rather than try to catch up all at once, I'll save the detailed accounts of the June 21 and July 26 City Council meetings until the next issue. A few brief notes will have to suffice for now.

June 7 - The first of the new City Council roundtable discussions. The topic of this one was development. No votes are taken at these roundtables and they are not televised. This

meeting wasn't nearly as interesting or productive as I hoped it would be, but it was a start.

June 21 - The long-awaited (and rather watered-down) amendments to the Smoking Ordinance were passed. The Council voted unanimously to amend the Zoning Ordinance to enact a nighttime ban on all trucks in excess of 2.5 tons except for those trucks originating or with destinations in Cambridge. The Massachusetts Highway Department has already responded by saying the ban is illegal.

July 26 - The City Council passed the Planning Board's trimmed-down version of the Backyard Zoning Ordinance. This was also the first meeting of the Council under the new rules passed at the June 21 meeting. Though some aspects were successful, the five, count 'em, five public comment periods were a dismal failure with the same people rising to speak at each. The initial reaction of this observer is that most of the new rules worked well, but that there should be just two periods for public comment - one prior to the Manager's Agenda and a second period prior to the consideration of communications, orders, reports, etc. Otherwise it will just be the same handful of people getting up five times to speak rather than once and that is no improvement.

Councillor Toomey's order calling for the declaration of the City Council's intention to not renew City Manager Healy's contract beyond the current term went down to defeat on a 3-6 vote with only Reeves, Toomey, and Triantafyllou supporting it. The matter will be reconsidered as the first order of business at the Sept 13 meeting.

Councillor Toomey also had two orders specifically targeting this writer. I'll have more to say about those in the next issue.

Finally, I beg the indulgence of all CCJ readers as I carefully try to manage the multiple hats that I am now wearing as the principal writer of this Journal and as a candidate in the municipal election. True journalists cringe at the very thought of trying to do this. I've become so used to wearing multiple civic and political hats over the last few years that it has become a way of life. All I can do is promise to be as objective as I can without becoming boring. If you find me lacking in either regard, let me know and I'll do my best to adjust.

Robert Winters

1) The Candidates of 1999

The nomination papers have been submitted and certified and the list of candidates who will be on this November's municipal ballot is pretty much set. It is expected that one or more referendum questions will also be put to the voters on Nov 2. Several candidate forums have been scheduled. A complete listing of these forums can be found in the Cambridge Civic Calendar at the CCJ web site. E-mail addresses and web sites for candidates are also listed at the CCJ site.

Cambridge City Council candidates (24):

Kathleen Born
 Jim Braude
 Jeff Chase
 Charles O. Christenson
 Henrietta Davis
 Marjorie Decker
 Vince Dixon
 Anthony Galluccio
 Dottie Giacobbe
 Robert Goodwin
 David Hoicka
 Bill Jones
 David Maher
 Daejanna Wormwood-Malone
 Alan Nidle (resident of 46 Main St., Somerville)
 Helder "Sonny" Peixoto
 Ken Reeves
 Erik Snowberg
 Michael Sullivan
 Tim Toomey
 Katherine Triantafillou
 David Trumbull
 James Williamson
 Robert Winters

Cambridge School Committee candidates (13):

Melody Brazo
 Shawn M. Burke
 Fred Fantini
 Joe Grassi
 Don Harding
 Michael Harshbarger
 Elizabeth "Tad" Kenney
 Jamisean Patterson
 Susana Segat
 Denise Simmons
 Alvin Thompson
 Alice Turkel
 Nancy Walser

Candidate Slates

Though most candidates over the years have been identified as either CCA (endorsed by the Cambridge Civic Association), Independent (endorsed by the Alliance for Change or popularly identified as an Independent), independent (unaffiliated but considered a candidate of substance - note the lower case), or fringe candidates.

The CCA slates have been determined and are as follows:
For City Council - Kathleen Born, Jim Braude, Henrietta Davis, Erik Snowberg, and Robert Winters.
For School Committee: Melody Brazo, Elizabeth "Tad" Kenney, Jamisean Patterson, Susana Segat, Denise Simmons, Alice Turkel, and Nancy Walser.

The word around town is that the Alliance for Change will not be making candidate endorsements this year, possibly

because of Councillor Toomey's ongoing dispute with the City Manager.

The Lavender Alliance, "a Cambridge political advocacy organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people with a progressive bent," also announced candidate slates:
For City Council: Kathleen Born, Jim Braude, Marjorie Decker, Ken Reeves, Erik Snowberg, and Katherine Triantafillou.
For School Committee: Melody Brazo, Tad Kenney, Susana Segat, Denise Simmons, and Alice Turkel.

The Lavender endorsements were not without controversy. Councillor Henrietta Davis was denied the endorsement, possibly as a strategic move to boost the chances of Marjorie Decker (who did not seek CCA endorsement). Nancy Walser was inexplicably denied endorsement for School Committee, possibly to strategically boost the chances of Melody Brazo.

Though the Eviction Free Zone (EFZ) is organizing a "Tenants' Forum," they have announced that they will not be endorsing candidates. Time will tell if any other ad hoc slates are formed between now and Election Day.

**2) Of Campaign Signs and Second Choice Votes -
by Glenn Koocher**

Every two years at around Labor Day, the old political hands join the novices in asking the same questions: "When are the signs going up?" "Why has it been so quiet?" "Do signs vote?" And "What do you think?" In the 32 years since I first started working on local campaigns, there are two constants: no one remembers the timetable from the two years before, and NO ONE knows what will actually happen.

It's ALWAYS slow, not only up to Labor Day, but even up to October 1. Other than the slow proliferation of signs and their cousins, the Bumper Stickers, there is little to interest the average voter. Sure, there are the coffees (the average progressive voter gets invited to 3.72 coffees per campaign) and house parties to introduce candidates, and there's door bell ringing, but even the street work and visibilities (those people holding signs who wave to you at subway stops and along main streets) don't pick up until the leaves start to turn brown around the edges. Retail campaigning in person has given way to various means of advertising (signs, stickers, and ads), mail, political telemarketing, and now e-campaigning. No one sees the impact of the volume of mail nor e-campaigning, just in its infancy now.

That makes signs very important, especially for new candidates. They introduce the "product" and establish a measure of credibility ("look at all the people who like this person - there must be __ signs up in this neighborhood").

There is almost always at least one surprise and signs can play a role. Sometimes someone comes out of nowhere, as Katherine Triantafillou did six years ago, to prove that a previously unidentified constituency (i.e., lesbians pooling strength with feminist activists) is large enough to be heard, changing the conventional political wisdom (Triantafillou has won reelection comfortably since). Still other times, a veteran falls off the ballot, the victim of voter overconfidence (CCA

icons Marcus Morton, Cornelia Wheeler, and Barbara Ackermann lost re-election bits to the “hot new faces” of their eras, while more recently, high profile City Councillors like Ed Cyr, David Wylie, Mary Ellen Preusser, and even the legendary John D. Lynch and Lenny Russell lost as incumbents.

Sometimes the CCA elects a school committee member that most people have never seen but whose color (usually white), politics (politically correct), affiliation (Agassiz, Peabody, or one of the “alternative schools”), and signage give them a boost with voters who throw away their School Committee vote as an after thought. This is the “pretty, new face” phenomenon, meaning an attractive candidacy, and you can tell the public just how clever and caring you are by the style of your house sign.

Three candidates for School Committee jump out because they used variations on kid art on their posters to raise them from obscurity to the spotlight. There was the Palmer Method writing on the blue and white Barbara Ackermann signs and bumper stickers that guided the future mayor to a first-time, second place finish in 1961. (And, by the way, to give you an idea of the tenor of the times, she was known as “Mrs. Paul Kurt Ackermann” on official documents.) In 1969, there was a schoolhouse integrated into the bumper stickers and signs of political rookie of the year Lorraine Butler. Remember the painted hand prints and unusual color combination on Alice Turkel’s signs that tell voters, “You don’t need to know anything about me except that I know kids.” Can you believe it, it works!

This year has been marked by the citywide eruption of signs in July and August for Bob Goodwin and Hector Piexoto and an explosion of signs for various new candidates for School Committee. By mid-October, experts are predicting that the most prolific signage in Cambridge will not be the ubiquitous control signs the city uses to instruct us on what we cannot do (no parking, no domestic violence, no rehabbing your house with permission of the good taste police, and move your car for street cleaning). Dominating the local landscape will be the characteristic political signs with the big #1 - that which identifies a candidate as uniquely Cambridge.

By the way, to give us all a lesson in humility, most people outside the city don’t get the #1. They see it as just another sign that Cantabrigians think they’re better than everyone else - as usual. It’s then that we have to explain the complicated PR voting system where voters ask for first choice ballots. Then they understand, but usually add some grouching comment about how “You Cambridge people just have to be different all the time.”

Retail street campaigning is slower for two reasons. First, fewer people are home during the day, and even fewer people enjoy being disturbed in the evening. Second, ringing bells sucks - plain and simple. You have to be nice to people you don’t know, pretend to care about what they say, and suffer the humiliation of having them slam the door in your face - doubly humiliating when they know who you are and they slam the door anyway. When I first ran in 1971 (29,000 votes cast), I rang doorbells all day and could expect to meet 130-150 people

face to face. They were seniors, young mothers, the occasional voting graduate student, people taking mental health days from the office, and the disappearing homemaker at-large. At the end of the day, I would write a gross of thank you letters that would take 2-3 hours, but those people would remember, and the strategy worked. Now, fewer people are at home during the day, and even fewer care about a local election. They almost depend on advertising, signs, mail, leaflets, and the editorial pages to help them make their decision.

The City Council is different from School Committee because so many people have been voting loyally for their favorite councillor for many years, or in the case of the Sullivans, three generations. And while signs can make a difference in establishing one’s candidacy as credible, here’s some advice that candidates might want to take seriously in getting them up.

1. Think carefully before you “put it on” someone to put up your sign. I’ve never forgotten the lessons proved true from true veterans of the local political wars, Walter Sullivan and the late Tom Mahoney (11 elections, 11 victories). The Sullivans have had the most loyal constituents for decades, and while some of the older ones are leaving for a better place, the rest remain in the camp. The Sullivans helped and respected them in times of grief, unemployment, emergency, or routine general needs. And, as the late Frank Maguire once told me with a tear in his eye, “After all they did for me, the only thing they ever asked me for was a vote.” Tom Mahoney, a genuine Cambridge native who grew up to be an MIT professor as well as a city councillor and school committee member, advised that it is better to show sympathetically that you understand the conflict facing voters with multiple loyalties. Better to remind them that we still use a secret ballot than to pressure them to put up your sign or apply your bumper sticker to shut you up. “Good word of mouth,” Mahoney said presciently, “is far more valuable and reliable than one sign competing for attention in a forest of advertisement.”
2. This raises an ancillary issue: looking for #2 votes from soon-to-be human sacrifice candidates and why you don’t want to pressure a homeowner to take down someone else’s house sign. It’s best to demonstrate appreciation for opponents in their home constituencies and when you speak to their neighbors (but you can still remind them it’s a secret ballot). Then suck up to, befriend, and show respect for the future losers for three reasons. First, they can say nice things about you to the six people whose second choice votes they control; second, they won’t trash you; but third, and more important, they might win someday. You might need their vote for Mayor eight years from now. Among the current crop of current high profile elected officials, Ken Reeves, Anthony Galluccio, David Maher, Tim Toomey, and Denise Simmons all endured early career defeats, not to mention the condescension of the veterans in their first campaigns. Candidates never forget which competitors treated them like credible adults when they first ran.

3. Signs are no substitute for hard campaigning and establishing a solid base. Ed Crane didn't use signs, and he dominated the political landscape throughout the 50s and 60s. Frank Duehay stopped using them in the mid-1970s. Duehay, on the other hand, made the best use of mail in the history of local politics. He had lots of niche groups of endorsers and targeted mailing lists (physicians for Duehay; environmentalists for Duehay; left handed and shy people for Duehay, etc.).
4. Having the house sign is absolutely no indication that any or all of the family will be voting for you. There is a strong set of side wagers going on about the number of homes with Goodwin signs up early that will be adding Galluccio, Sullivan, or Maher signs just about the time the Red Sox are starting to crap out.
5. You do not do a business owner a favor by asking the proprietor to put your sign in the window. Unless the owner loves to put everyone's signs up as the late "John the Cobbler" did in North Cambridge, you put the shopkeeper in an awful spot. Not to speak for everyone, but there are stores that I will not patronize because they put signs up for people who went after me - and that was 15 years ago. Others will take their laundry, do their copying, purchase their coffee, or buy their lottery tickets, smokes, and newspapers at the next convenience store if you offend them by putting up the sign of a candidate they don't like.
6. If the house is not owner-occupied, chances are that the occupants ARE NOT voting for you. The two people that everyone hates are the boss and the landlord. These people don't know how to run the office and how to keep your rent reasonable, and they're telling you whom to vote for? I don't think so.
7. Make sure your signs tell people what you're running for. Unless your name has taken on permanent status among your loyal constituents ("Sheila!" or "Saundra!" did have effective one word stickers), you are still a local Cambridge pol, and nobody outside the city limits knows or cares who you are. Control your eagerness to put yourself in the icon category.
8. Spend the money and make good signs. The flimsier ones do have a way of coming down, usually right after last call and closing time. I would love to tell the story about how and why a particular almost-elected-but-not-quite candidate for School Committee in 1973 had his 48/60" signs disfigured, ripped up, or pulled down night after late night from Pebble Gifford's fence on Sparks Street, but I swore to Lenny Clarke and several other now respectable citizens I'd never rat them out.
9. Do consider buying advertising/sign space in the subway. It costs money, but no one is offended by subway platform billboarding or on-train posters. And remember, those poor commuters have nothing to do while they wait for the trains or their stations but stand there, sweat, and read anything they can find - i.e., your signs. You even have an opportunity to deliver a message of more than just your name, office, and #1.

And there's advice for homeowners and shopkeepers, too. People remember who had signs up for whom and in what years. If you put up a sign, others will notice when you come looking for the curb cut, tree trimming, or job for your kid in the Mayor's program.

There is a much better early indicator of who's going to win. It's the late money - the contributions that come in two weeks or less before Election Day. The knowledgeable people decide you're going to win and want to be on the bandwagon, but they want to wait until after the reporting deadline for reporting pre-October 15 election contributions. They can have it both ways: you know they gave you money, but no one else knows until the election is over.

3) May 3 City Council meeting

The Living Wage Ordinance that guarantees a \$10 per hour wage for City employees and employees working under City contracts was unanimously ordained at this well-attended meeting. There were a number of amendments to the ordinance designed to ensure that no excess burden is put on the nonprofit agencies that work under contract with the City. Contractors can apply to the City Manager annually for a hardship waiver and a limited number of positions were declared exempt. The Ordinance went into effect on July 3.

A late communication from the City Manager regarding the possibility of a future eminent domain taking on Fulkerson Street in East Cambridge was of great interest to those who have followed the ComEnergy controversy and subsequent events. Some councillors had questioned why money had not been budgeted for this purpose in the FY2000 Budget (passed at the May 17 Council meeting). The Manager explained why it was advisable to wait until after an appraisal before making any appropriation request and that the approval of the appropriation should be concurrent with any order of taking. There was considerable discussion as some councillors questioned the Manager's commitment to the acquisition. There were discussions of alternatives and of the necessity of a community process if there were to be any street closures in the area.

The public comment portion of the meeting had its fair share of speakers in support of the Toomey-Born zoning amendment affecting the ComEnergy site in the Kendall Square area. Notable was the speech by Fred Fantini who recited what he called the "top ten list of excuses for not supporting the amendment." The list included such things as spot zoning, not understanding the issue, no leadership in East Cambridge, it's supported only by a small group of angry people, and that it would lose in court. Mr. Fantini likened the proposed development to five Rindge Towers and an Alewife Garage and rang the alarm of unknown consequences of toxic waste. Phil Higonnet of the East Cambridge Planning Team detailed the considerable number and scale of development proposals now pending in East Cambridge and the Kendall Square area.

A person claiming to represent "the Church of the Subgenious Foundation" took issue with Councillor Reeves for playing a role in the cancellation of an event due to possible affiliations with certain hate groups and references to "trench

coats." The speaker, Gary Dreyfoos, tried to cast this as an issue of freedom of speech. Councillor Reeves read the details from a web site that led to his intervention in the matter and pointed out that there is such a thing as unprotected speech.

There was yet another discussion of crosswalks and whether barrels should be deployed in addition to signage. Said the Manager, "It's deja vu all over again." It is remarkable just how much time is spent by this Council talking about crosswalks and sidewalks.

4) Zoning Notes

The Planning Board Backyard Zoning Petition and the Cook Petition had their hearing before the Ordinance Committee on May 5. Not surprisingly, Committee Chair Henrietta Davis had to rein in the inevitable Bob LaTremouille.

Councillor Born was visibly annoyed as she spoke to the Cook Petition proponents, saying she had not heard of any outcry against swimming pools, one of the things that would be further regulated under the petition. She questioned how parents could have a jungle gym in their yard if they couldn't put bark or sand under it. She strongly objected to the characterization of the Planning Board Petition as one that undermines and destroys all zoning work for the last two years and noted that the real issue was excessive building in back yards and paving everything over - not swimming pools and decks.

When Councillor Born asked if the Cook Petition would preclude garden statuary, Mr. LaTremouille said that it would, because it was taking up space, drawing a parallel with the recent art controversy at Fresh Pond. He said there could be an enormous statue that would take up the whole backyard.

Councillor Russell asked if this meant she couldn't have a statue of the Blessed Mother or some other shrine. Apparently, the petition as written would prohibit this. (This provision was revised the next day to allow shrines.) She then asked about barbecues, and so on. Councillor Sullivan defended the proponents, saying that the American Pediatric Society recommended against jungle gyms and that it was against the law to have a barbecue within 30 ft of a building anyway.

July 6 Proposals from CGMAC:

The Citywide Growth Management Advisory Committee (CGMAC) has proposed to the Planning Board a number of recommended changes to the Zoning Ordinance. The basic outline is as follows:

1. (a) Allow housing in all zones in the city that currently do not allow residential use, at the density and height permitted in the current commercial zone
- (b) Facilitate conversion of existing commercial buildings to housing use.
2. Facilitate small-scale mixed use development.
3. Rezone selected business zones to residential.
4. (a) Use zoning to limit parking by simplifying the procedure for providing less parking than the minimum requirement.

(b) Require a special permit to exceed the maximum parking requirement.

5. Design rules to encourage alternate transportation modes, specifically affecting parking location, building entrances, building transparency, and bicycle parking design.

6. Extend and amend the IPOP for six months.

The Planning Board has given their approval to the formalized versions of these proposals. They will now go to the City Council for final approval.

5) May 10 City Council meeting

The Planning Board report on the Toomey-Born petition (for the ComEnergy site) arrived at this meeting with a negative recommendation. The Board took issue with the proposed prohibition against underground construction. They argued that this would lead to the least desirable building form and site design, namely large expanses of surface parking or the lower floors of buildings given over to parking garages and the bulk of all construction visible above ground.

The Planning Board also noted that the fifty-percent open space requirement was far in excess of any other PUD (Planned Unit Development) district in the City. They argued that, together with the above prohibition on underground parking garages, this would lead to a suburban development pattern inconsistent with existing development in that area. They suggested that there are better vehicles for bringing about new usable open space in that part of the City.

Also included in the Planning Board report was a statement about the desirability of locating higher density projects such as this in proximity to public transit. They noted the positive public benefits of its mix of uses, urban design plan, public amenities, and a mandated publicly accessible skating rink.

State Rep. Jarrett Barrios addressed the Council on several matters underway at the State House regarding affordable housing. The House has passed, with much credit due to Barrios, a new rental housing production program. It provides for \$20 million for the production of new affordable rental housing. Barrios predicted Senate approval and the signature of Governor Cellucci. Rep. Barrios also reported on a bill that would require the MDC to enter into an agreement with the City for scheduling rights and renovations at Magazine Beach.

Public Comment

Two topics dominated the public comment this evening with many people commenting on both - the pending purchase by the City of the Squirrel Brand properties on Boardman St. and on various housing-related issues. The Squirrel Brand properties are seen as an opportunity to permanently secure open space in the form of the community garden now located there and family sized affordable housing units on the rest of the parcel. [The City was successful in its bid for the property.]

Nancy Hall, Bill Marcotte, Jean Caldez, Hatch Sterritt, and others made a pitch for re-instituting rent control in Cambridge. The Eviction Free Zone (EFZ) is trying to create a campaign for this purpose. Mr. Sterritt stretched credulity as he tried to make his case that only rent control could bring about fundamental

justice, bring landlords and tenants face to face, restore democracy and community, enrich the local culture, and mediate "locational advantages." He characterized rent control as a moderate program.

State House Bill on Mandatory Rent Escrowing

The Council passed an order from Councillor Born opposing bills now at the State House that would require mandatory rent escrowing and other procedural requirements. Councillor Born took issue with the notion that a "legislator from Rehoboth should be telling us how to do business."

Councillor Toomey made clear why he would not vote in favor of the order, noting that mandatory rent escrowing was part of his housing proposal for the City that preceded the Question 9 campaign that ended virtually all rent control in Massachusetts. He argued that Born's order was again pitting landlords against tenants. He especially noted the plight of the low-income homeowner, stating that in some cases withheld rent can destroy the owner.

Councillor Triantafillou argued that there are few remedies left for tenants in this day and age. She called for more City money to be dedicated to affordable housing.

Councillor Galluccio stated that he was "not a supporter of not escrowing rent" and noted that "it's not in anyone's interest to not have rent escrowed." He observed that he has seen a subtle change in the City with quality of life and open space issues rising as affordable housing slips. He declared that he would put affordable housing ahead of a new library or a new police station and would put more money into affordable housing "rather than invest in capital projects for people I don't know yet."

The order passed with Born, Davis, Duehay, Russell, and Triantafillou voting for it, Galluccio and Toomey voting present, and Reeves and Sullivan absent.

A word on Cable TV

A discussion between Councillor Galluccio and the City Manager relating to various issues about cable TV served as a reminder of the re-licensing process that is now underway. With barely any publicity, there have been a number of workshops conducted by CCTV (public access), two hearings (May 19th and 26th), and an "ascertainment hearing" to assess how well MediaOne has met the obligations of the current contract with the City of Cambridge.

The City Manager characterized what is now happening as just the beginning of a longer process. He noted that MediaOne is being acquired by AT&T and that the City's Request for Proposals has led to a response from RCN to provide competition for cable TV services. There is a tradeoff between extracting public benefits from these cable TV providers and ensuring that additional expenses imposed on providers do not result in unacceptably high costs to consumers.

Mr. Healy described some of the emerging realities of cable TV and the potentially huge market for telephone and high speed Internet services that will inevitably be part of any services offered by either RCN or AT&T/MediaOne. RCN is a subsidiary of Boston Edison Company, which has now

purchased Cambridge Electric Light Company. The likelihood is that a number of services will be bundled together. Mr. Healy suggested that competition would probably be the best control on prices in this emerging environment.

Talking about the Library - No Action

Councillor Davis raised a number of issues about a recent survey commissioned by the Library Trustees on the siting of a new or expanded Main Library. She quoted objections raised about the methodology of the survey, arguing that there was a bias toward the current location of the Main Library. She referred to a letter from one of the library trustees that seemed to support this.

Councillor Triantafillou was less than generous as she implied that Ms. Davis' remarks maligned "an esteemed member of the Board of Trustees." She noted that her decision on the library siting would not be influenced by the survey, stating that "we should decide based not on numbers, but on our intelligence."

Councillor Born also question the methodology of the survey, noting that about half of residents surveyed chose the site to which they were accustomed and that this is not surprising or particularly informative.

Moving the Lechmere Station

Councillor Galluccio stated his support for moving the Lechmere station of the Green Line across the O'Brien Highway and connecting First Street to O'Brien in order to divert traffic from Third Street. The City Manager noted that even though there is a mitigation agreement to do this, the Central Artery project is consuming all the available funds.

Councillor Russell pointed out that had the City not sued over Scheme Z and the Charles River Crossing, mitigation funds would have been available for this purpose.

Councillor Triantafillou declared her opposition to "moving Lechmere Station away into Somerville." She also objected to Galluccio's suggestion that part of Third Street be closed, noting that she has a business on Third Street.

[Note: The MBTA recently announced plans to swap the land of the current Lechmere Station with the Guilford-owned railroad land across the O'Brien Highway. The proposal calls for significant new development in that area and some new parkland. The Lechmere station would be moved, the Green Line extended to West Medford, and other transportation facilities added. It is unclear what will happen next.]

Late in the Meeting

During a discussion of the proposed new rules for the City Council meeting, Mayor Duehay quipped, "I think they love us as we are." To this, Councillor Russell responded, "I take the pulse of the city, and it's erratic."

Councillor Galluccio spoke to his order welcoming back the New England Patriots, noting that his mother has been watching the Patriots for 25 years. To this Councillor Russell responded, "I thought she'd made better use of her time." She added that as long as we were congratulating the state legislature for coming up with the money for the Patriots, maybe they could find \$70 million to fund drug prescription

reimbursements for senior citizens. Councillor Triantafillou added her request that \$70 million be allocated for affordable housing. The order with these two amendments passed and will have precisely no effect.

6) May 17 City Council meeting

The most significant business at this meeting was the passage of the FY2000 budget and the accompanying orders. Of somewhat less significance was Councillor Russell's order to explore the use of mimes in crosswalks to demonstrate pedestrian safety.

Public comment was dominated by (a) people speaking in support of the purchase of the Squirrel Brand properties for open space and affordable housing, and (b) people urging the City to buy the vacant lot on Putnam Ave. that some have called "Putnam Park." The latter was never a realistic option, in spite of the dozens of people who advocated for the purchase. The former is not only politically easy to support, but the greater liquidity of housing funds makes the purchase much simpler.

After an executive session to discuss pending legislation and a 54 minute discussion (that's right!) about where the Minuteman Tour bus should stop, the Council passed a new ordinance banning the sale of laser pointers within Cambridge.

The FY2000 Budget is approved

The Council voted 8-0 (Reeves on vacation) to pass the FY2000 General Fund Budget of \$268,431,300. Included in this budget was an additional \$535,000 initial allocation for the Agenda for Children. An accompanying order was passed that would name the proposed West Cambridge youth center in honor of City Councillor Sheila Doyle Russell. Good choice.

The Council unanimously approved the Public Investment Fund Budget of \$20,612,420. Prior to the vote, there was a long discussion about delays in the design and construction of pedestrian crossings over and under the railroad tracks in North Cambridge. Prompted by questions from the public comment period by Michael Brandon, the City Manager explained some of the legal problems that are delaying things. These include the need to locate one end of a proposed overpass on private property and to locate a pedestrian connector through the parking lot of the Fresh Pond Shopping Center. [Several orders growing out of this discussion were on the agenda for the June 21 meeting.]

The Water Fund Budget of \$11,691,390 was unanimously approved.

The Council's vote to move the amendments to the Smoking Ordinance to a 2nd reading prompted Councillor Davis to outline her objections to the amendments. She characterized the proposal as neither well scrutinized nor progressive. She argued that it does not do what needs to be done and that the proposed separations in restaurants were totally inadequate. Councillor Sullivan argued the opposite position as he complimented those who had worked on the legislation.

Other notable items at this meeting were (a) an informative report from the Community Development Department of development projects that either have obtained building permits

or are in the pipeline; (b) a legal opinion submitted by Councillor Toomey taking issue with the City's legal advice regarding the Toomey-Born petition for the Com/Energy site; and (c) approval of authorization to issue bonds for traffic calming (\$750,000), construction in and around Lafayette Square (\$500,000), design of the Harvard Square Combined Sewer Project (\$1,000,000), various sewer and flood remediation improvements (\$2,400,000), and an additional \$24,235,000 for various capital projects included in the FY2000 Capital Budget.

7) May 24 City Council meeting

In one of the more satisfying moments of the year, City Manager Robert Healy announced that the City's bid for purchase of the Squirrel Brands properties in Area 4 had been accepted by the owners. Many people, including this writer, had written and spoken in support of the City obtaining this property for housing and preservation of the Broadway and Boardman Community Garden. Megan Brook even brought flowers to Mayor Duehay.

In the day prior to this meeting, a resolution was reached on the Com/Energy site. Consequently, the Council allowed the Toomey-Born petition to expire without action. Elie Yardin likened the process to rape and Carole Bellew bemoaned the inadequate resources available to neighbors opposing this and other development proposals now pending in East Cambridge and the Kendall Square area. [In my remarks to the Council, I reminded the councillors of the process initiated by former Mayor Reeves several years ago to develop a vision for Kendall Square. The point I was making was that zoning can only do so much and that the focus must shift from preventive and reactive strategies to more positive and creative approaches.]

Joe Joseph spoke about asbestos in soil samples taken at the WR Grace site. In his usual style he lashed out at anyone and everyone who might question his motives, including this writer and several councillors. [Note: At the July 26 meeting, there were several council orders addressing the need for improved oversight and other measures aimed at guaranteeing public safety during any construction and soil disturbance at the WR Grace site.]

The Com/Energy site resolution

With insufficient votes to pass the Toomey-Born petition and compelling legal arguments suggesting that the petition might not survive a legal challenge, members of the East Cambridge Planning Team (ECPT) and representatives of the owners, developers, and the City came to a resolution. The deal called for an additional reduction in approved parking spaces, a decrease in FAR from 3.24 to 3.08 (still rather high by Cambridge standards), a fund to be established for open space procurement, 250 units of housing in the project (original proposal had no housing), and a commitment to 25% open space in the project area.

8) June 14 City Council meeting

There was an air of resentment present in the Council Chamber during this meeting due to the absence of three

councillors. Though it was understandable and proper for the Mayor, as Chair of the School Committee, to leave to attend the Tobin School graduation, Councillors Galluccio and Reeves also made an early exit in order to be at the graduation. More than a few people in attendance, including Councillor Triantafillou, expressed disdain in suggesting that politicking was at the heart of the absences.

Public comment

Michael Isenberg lead off the show by alerting the councillors to the fact that the owners of the parcel known as Putnam Park were moving forward with plans for three townhouses on the site and that a fence had been erected around the perimeter.

Lydia Vickers and others from Area 4 presented a zoning petition that would change the zoning of an area between Main St. and School St. from Business A to Residence C-1.

Numerous people spoke in behalf of the proposed amendments to the Smoking Ordinance that were to come to a vote this evening.

The most dramatic testimony came from Lawrence Atkins in describing how police officers stopped, searched, and roughly handled his son James at Hoyt Field. James recently graduated as valedictorian of his class at the Willow School in Sudbury. Councillor Reeves spoke at length about the incident and emphasized that there was no curfew at Hoyt Field and that the police had no business doing what they apparently did. He went on to speak about the searches of a number of elementary school students in several Cambridge public schools, a matter that has received a significant amount of press coverage over the last several months and which has been discussed at a number of very contentious School Committee meetings.

Other items of note

(a) Ann Roosevelt and Timothy Carey were appointed to five-year terms on the Cambridge Water Board. Joshua Engel was appointed to a five year term on the Police Review and Advisory Board.

(b) The City Manager confirmed that the owners of the parcel known as "Putnam Park" will be proceeding with plans for residential development on that parcel.

(c) There was a recommendation from the Historical Commission to landmark the White Tower Restaurant building in Central Square (Moody's Felfel).

(d) A status report was received from the Fresh Pond Master Plan Advisory Committee, including a Natural Resource Stewardship Plan.

(e) There was a communication from a group calling itself "Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods" (Phil Dowds, Stash Horowitz, Elie Yardin, John Pitkin, and others) regarding the Cambridge Research Park proposal. [My suspicion is that this group will want to play a role in the November elections.]

(f) There was a communication from the Cambridge Residents for Growth Management (CRGM) regarding a zoning reform resolution calling for extension of the IPOP and related measures. The petition is referred to as "Support the People and Neighborhoods of Cambridge" (SPAN).

(g) An order from Councillor Toomey calls for the City to issue bonds for \$35 million to acquire active recreational space in East Cambridge, Wellington-Harrington, and Area IV.

(h) An order congratulating Mike Nicolero, who will be leaving his job as Managing Director of the Water Department

(i) An order from Councillor Reeves urging people to read a 32-page broadside called "Which Peoples' Republic" written by rent control activist Bill Cunningham [synopsis - the CCA, the universities, and City officials have all conspired to drive all the good guys out of town and the only solution is to bring back rent control.]

(j) A Finance Committee report regarding the relationship between technology transfer and the tax-exempt status of the universities, and the in-lieu-of-tax payments that Harvard and MIT make to the City.

City Council Scorecard:

Council Orders of May 3, 10, 17, 24 and June 14

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	3	3	1	4	2	7	1	0
Davis	2	1	0	6	2	13	2	0
Duehay	4	0	2	2	3	31	12	0
Galluccio	6	0	2	6	79	16	6	1
Reeves	0	0	1	2	3	13	7	0
Russell	3	3	1	2	8	10	0	0
Sullivan	4	1	1	6	39	27	4	0
Toomey	5	4	2	10	37	16	6	0
Triantafillou	2	3	1	0	3	7	1	0
Total by category	25	13	8	36	86	122	36	1

In the next issue, a cumulative Scorecard is planned covering the period from November 1997 to July 1999.

9) Messing with the Charter - by Robert Winters

There are rumblings around town about changing the Plan E Charter under which Cambridge has been governed for almost 60 years. One proposal calls for scrapping our city manager system in favor of a directly elected strong mayor. Another proposal calls for taking the authority for certain appointments out of the hands of the City Manager and placing it into the hands of the City Council. A perennial proposal calls for replacing our proportional representation election system with a mix of district and at-large councillors.

I'll not disguise the fact that I detest all of these proposals. I feel that a strong mayor means a weak council and the erosion of representation of minority viewpoints. I can't even imagine the City Council fairly and professionally making appointments to boards and commissions. If anyone wants to dismantle our PR election system, I'll battle to defend it.

There are several significant factors involved in what some see as less than an ideal operation of our municipal government, and none of these factors involves flaws in the charter. Blaming the charter is like "blaming the system." It lets too many people off the hook.

Some have argued that the City Manager has too much power. The authority of a city manager does tend to grow with tenure. This is neither surprising nor is it fundamentally a problem. A city manager who keeps his job for a long time generally does so because the people who hire him believe he is doing a good job, regardless of what they may say publicly. The manager takes the heat while the councillors accept the adoration.

One cannot dismiss the quality of the councillors when considering the unresponsiveness of government. Is the current City Council acting cooperatively and proactively on significant issues? It's easy to blame the charter, but one should not assume a structural problem when a much simpler explanation may be available. How often do your elected councillors team up on proposals that are well researched and which may hold the prospect of broad support among the electorate and the elected? I can name a few instances, but they are few and far between.

Where are the civic organizations? I'm not talking about reactive groups with a singular focus. I'm talking about those organizations whose mission is to take a broad view of the function of municipal government, to scrutinize the city budget, to measure the effectiveness of city departments, and to work with elected officials and city staff in the furtherance of the organization's goals and in the development of policy.

Civic activism these days is dominated by zoning advocacy groups, housing advocacy groups, gender advocacy groups, open space advocacy groups, etc. Meanwhile, comprehensive civic groups struggle to survive. Whatever became of the League of Women Voters? The Cambridge Civic Association (CCA) once provided a framework within which coherent and progressive policy-making could take place with minimal political risk to individual councillors. This relative lack of political cover once provided by such civic organizations is one of the reasons we have such a reactive City Council today.

While it is a valid exercise to consider those aspects of our city charter that may benefit from revision, I would suggest not looking for charter-based solutions when simpler and more effective solutions may be available which are less likely to lead to unintended negative consequences. Hold the feet of your elected officials to the fire when you believe they are being unresponsive. Help to reinvigorate those civic and political organizations that can serve to allow councillors to take risks with the confidence that any loss of votes will be compensated by the addition of other votes from those who support the goals of the organization as a whole.

Above all, pay attention to your municipal government. Go beyond your own particular advocacy to learn the big picture. I believe that when you do you'll better understand why the City Manager makes certain choices, why your pet project could not be funded, and why your elected officials act the way they do or

fail to act the way you'd like them to do. Then you can make informed choices rather than choices that are just as reactive as those you may now be criticizing.

10) Planning Board and the BZA

The City Manager announced several significant appointments over the summer. In light of all the focus on charter change and growth and development, the Planning Board and Board of Zoning Appeals are especially significant these days. Here are the new lineups:

Planning Board

Members:

Thomas Anninger, 26 Healy St.
Larissa Brown, 42 Madison Ave.
Florrie Darwin, 7 Follen St.
Scott Lewis, 6 Walden Mews
Hugh Russell, 1 Corliss Pl.
Barbara Shaw, 57 Sixth St.
William Tibbs, 79 Pearl St.

Associate Members:

Kevin Benjamin, 82 Kinnaird St.
Pamela Winters, 41 Orchard St.

Board of Zoning Appeals:

Members:

Lauren Curry, 3 Concord Ave.
John O'Connell, 177 Lakeview Ave.
Charles Pierce, 285 Brookline Ave.
Thomas Sieniewicz, 14 Hews St.
Susan Spurlock, 2 Parkway Terr.

Associate Members:

Susan Connelly, 24 Newman St.
Ed DeAngelo, 56 Dana St.
Arch Horst, 1640 Mass. Ave.
Jennifer Pinck, 431 Huron Ave.
Rebecca Tepper, 5 Clinton St.
Marc Truant, 32 Warren St.

Every citizen of Cambridge should recognize and appreciate the enormous amount of time and effort these people contribute to their city. A special thank you goes to Paul Dietrich, Fred Cohn, and Carolyn Mieth for their years of service on the Planning Board. They can now relax each Tuesday evening as others carry the load. Let's also remember Hugo Salemme of the Planning Board who recently passed away.

11) Civic Tidbits

I learned this summer of a free service available to residents of Cambridge and Somerville that will alert you via e-mail when it's towing day in your neighborhood. The URL of the web site is <http://streetsweeper.usuck.com> and it works.

The Annual Meeting of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association on May 19 was relatively uneventful, yet out of it came a flurry of e-mail from its president who was bothered by my use of a tape recorder to capture some of the discussion that

took place at this publicly advertised meeting. That doesn't top a meeting of another civic organization I attended some years ago after which I was told to destroy the notes that I took at the meeting. So it goes.

Cambridge lost one of its most promising musical talents on July 3. Mark Sandman, lead singer and bassist with the group Morphine died tragically of a heart attack while performing at a show in Rome, Italy. A fund to support music education in the Cambridge Public Schools has been established in Mark's name.

Former City Councillor Pearl Wise and former City Manager John Corcoran passed away during the summer.

On July 22, the new Paul Revere Park on the north side of the Charles River Dam was dedicated. This is one of a series of new parks that will be created along the Charles River downstream of the Museum of Science. It's worth a visit to see not only the design of the park but to check out the construction nearby of the two new bridges that will soon span the Charles River.

There was a very successful test on July 24 of the machinery and tallying software that is to be used in this year's municipal elections. Nonetheless, the real challenge is to get more residents to vote in the municipal election and to be fully informed about how to cast a preferential (ranked) ballot as we do in our City Council and School Committee elections. My analysis of the ballots cast in 1997 show that we have room for improvement in our voter education efforts.

The City Manager appointed Ini Tomue to the position of Public Information Officer for the City of Cambridge. The idea behind the position is that there should be someone in city government who will organize and put out information about those services and processes that people need to know about, the locations of the various City functions activities, etc. As more people move into Cambridge who are unfamiliar with how the city operates, the need for this position increases.

I had a chance to attend the Open Air Circus this summer just over the Cambridge line into Somerville. The performance space is in the now roofless shell of an old factory building adjoining the railroad tracks just north of Beacon Street, Somerville. The performers are all children. I couldn't help but imagine what a resource this space would be if it were in Cambridge. Perhaps it's time to give annexation another look.

After 21 years living in Cambridge, I was treated to my first drive-by shooting the other night on Pine Street. That marks the second night in a row that we've heard gunshots outside the house. This time it was right out in front, but the only thing hit was a couple of cars and two houses. The previous night landed a young man in the hospital with multiple gunshot wounds.

Cambridge Civic Calendar:

Tues, Sept 7

7:30pm **Planning Board** meeting (Senior Center) Agenda includes introduction of new Planning Board members, election of a chairperson, public hearing on YWCA proposal, and Citywide Growth Management Committee discussion.

Wed, Sept 8

5:30pm **Cambridge Bicycle Committee** (City Hall Annex)

Thurs, Sept 9

5:30pm **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities.** (51 Inman St., 2nd floor conference room)

6:00pm **Green Ribbon Open Space Committee** (City Hall Annex, 3rd Floor Conference Room)

Sat, Sept 11

Noon to 6pm **Cambridge River Festival** (Memorial Drive between Western Ave. and JFK St.) Rain date is Sept 12.

Mon, Sept 13

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

Tues, Sept 14

7:00pm **City Council Candidate Forum** - "Greenspace & Environmental Issues: Platforms for 2000", sponsored by Cambridge Greenspace Alliance. (Cambridge Senior Center, Central Square) Three panels - 7 to 8, 7:30 to 8:30, 8 to 9pm.

Thurs, Sept 16

5:00pm **Growth Management Advisory Committee** (City Hall Annex, 3rd Floor Conference Room)

7:00pm **Porter Square Neighbors Association** meeting (Metropolitan New Life Baptist Church, 16 Beech Street)

7:00pm **Green Ribbon Open Space Committee** (City Hall Annex, 3rd Floor Conference Room)

7:00pm **City Council Candidates' Forum.** The focus of this forum will be "City-wide Development." (First Baptist Church, Central Square)

Sat, Sept 18

9am to 1pm **Household Hazardous Waste Collection** (Armory, 450 Concord Ave., next to the Sozio Rotary)

9:00am **Tree Walk of Central Square** with Larry Acosta, Cambridge City Arborist. Tree care demonstration at 9am, walk from 10am to noon. (Meet at City Hall.)

Tues, Sept 21

7:30pm **Planning Board** meeting (Senior Center)

Thurs, Sept 23

4:00pm Meeting of the **Affordable Housing Trust** (Ackermann Room, 2nd Floor, City Hall)

6:00pm **Cambridge Pedestrian Committee** (City Hall Annex)

time unknown: **City Council Candidates' Debate**, sponsored by the Democratic City Committee and moderated by Barbara Ackermann and Glenn Koocher. (location to be determined)

Sat, Sept 25

9:00am **Tree Walk of Brattle Street and Harvard Square** with Larry Acosta, Cambridge City Arborist. Tree care demonstration at 9am, walk from 10am to noon. (Meet at Mass. Ave. & Garden St.)

Mon, Sept 27

5:30pm The **City Council** will hold a roundtable discussion on affordable housing in Cambridge. (Sullivan Chamber)