
Cambridge Civic Journal

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PRE-ELECTION ISSUE

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0) Foreword

Though it's not been easy to find the time to assemble this issue, here it is for your reading pleasure or angst. You should expect the next one to follow on the heels of this since I would like to get information about this Tuesday's municipal elections out to everyone as fast as I possibly can.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that wearing the two hats of journalist and candidate has been a headache for me in many ways. As a candidate, objectivity should not be the highest priority in a whirlwind of shameless self-promotion. As a journalist, the priorities are reversed. As it turns out, the two roles clashed with each other to the detriment of both. In the future, I'll stick with just one hat at a time.

The good thing about the getting the elections over is that it will enable me to return to writing with more regularity. I hope this is good for all CCJ readers. I know it will be good for me.

Due to time constraints, I will be omitting the City Council Scoreboard in this issue. I will also delay the reports from three Council meetings until the next issue.

Finally, I'd like to especially thank Glenn Koocher for his articles in this and the previous issue and for the great job he did moderating a number of candidate forums. We could use a few more dedicated souls like Glenn in the Cambridge civic landscape.

Robert Winters

1) Why You Should Care About the School Committee - *by Glenn Koocher*

This year, the School Committee race may represent the last chance you have to make a real difference if we're going to save a once proud school system.

School Committee voting is the step-child of a local election, an afterthought for most voters. And why not, as far as most people are concerned? Seventy percent of Cantabrigians don't have a relative in a Cambridge public school; few have a reason to enter a school building; and the local school is a blur on the local radar screen compared to the national attack on the quality of education and the other issues in their lives.

The Cambridge public schools were once so distinguished that encyclopedias of the 1940s used to cite their quality in any description of the city. In the late 1960's and early 70's intense political campaigns rescued the schools away from patronage and advanced more student-focused agendas, professional superintendencies, and rebuilding programs. The city became the first east of the Mississippi to desegregate voluntarily and constructively, built a new high school, established professional personnel functions, and empowered parents (for better or worse).

But there was always a dirty little secret in Cambridge: among the teaching ranks and infrastructure, there was always a heavy concentration of faculty and personnel who weren't all that stellar. That generation of baby boomers who went to college whether they needed to or not, majored in elementary or secondary education because it was easy to get through, and went to their local politicians for their first teaching jobs were more common than the people who grew up with images of the teacher as hero/mentor.

In Cambridge, mediocrity was tolerated - almost aspired to - among some. Like the rest of the city's administration, the "lifetime Cambridge residents" still run the infrastructure. They outlast the outsiders, the professionals who drop by from time to time to run the "big picture" while the classrooms, departments, and corridors are under the guidance of that "invisible hand" of time, events, and society that is immune to the influence of more enlightened graduate schools of education (and I'm absolutely not talking about Harvard). The extreme case example: Mary Lou McGrath, the North Cambridge native who's lifetime career in Cambridge culminated in a disastrous superintendency that boosted internal administrative patronage for about eight years and stagnated things until her retirement in 1997.

So, what can the School Committee do and why should you care? Theoretically, they run the whole shebang. Or they used to until education reform took away (thankfully) most of the personnel power and handed it to the superintendent of schools.

The superintendent, like the City Manager, is, effectively, a personnel czar who neither needs nor requires the approval of the elected board to appoint teachers, principals, or department heads.

Of course, you'd never know that from reading the candidate literature. Based on what's been dropped on my door (and since North Cambridge has gone yuppie, this once bastion of strictly ethnic/independent politics is now open to the full, wide spectrum of candidates), it is the dynamic, personal leadership and thoughtfulness of the Agassiz and Cambridgeport School-based candidates that is needed to redeem America's schools, and those of Cambridge in particular.

Why is this year so important?

Consider this - we're losing the battle for good schools:

- (1) Some people who observe things more objectively (like the state department of education) are noting that Cambridge is a system on the verge of "turning." Turning means that it heads irretrievably down the educational sinkhole - like Boston, for example. Like dive, dive, dive.
- (2) The notorious arrogance and insatiability of some parents and special interests coupled with the city's reputation for difficult politics cut into the numbers of serious candidates for important jobs. We'll have a real hard time attracting really good principals, for example, not to mention department heads or superintendents. This means the mediocrity fosters the internal promotions.
- (3) The public schools are losing more students to private and parochial alternatives than because of families moving out to escape rent gouging. These parents are not saying gracious things about the school system as they depart for BB&N, usually around the 7th, 8th, or 9th grades. This is a constituency we can't afford to desert the public school system.
- (4) Student achievement rates are low compared with neighboring communities, something that is more socio-economically based than tied to other factors. Cambridge has a very high percentage of poor kids and single parent families and this makes learning more difficult, and the flight of the middle class, like the drop in achievement, seems long term.
- (5) The high school is a bureaucracy with a bloat factor, tracking disguised as a house system, and a security staff almost more numerous than guidance counselors. Parents of 8th graders have a better sense of this than you might expect.
- (6) The public doesn't feel it's getting value for its education money.
- (7) The school system still doesn't have a system-wide curriculum, and even if it did, based on comments of some teachers, it still wouldn't matter. I actually had a teacher at the King Open School tell me that he didn't like the city's curriculum or text so he made a unilateral decision not to use it. When questioned, he responded, "It's my classroom. I'll do what I want." Nice public relations. His principal wimped out on me, too.

- (8) There is a major class distinction between them that gets and them that don't in Cambridge - again, not a new theme. The desegregation plan still facilitates socio-economic segregation that helps boost achievement at the King Open and Agassiz Schools at the expense of those where parents can't or won't come out at night to meetings and don't have the kinds of advocates to add services and keep their schools flourishing. As the student population falls and schools consolidate, look for these schools without strong (white, affluent) constituencies to be merged - at the inconvenience of their neighborhood kids and their education.

The most important criterion to me is the whether the School Committee member can be an effective player. No offense to a lot of truly nice human beings, but most of the CCA-endorsed members with whom I served or observed either never understood, never knew, or were never let in on how things really worked. They talked wonderful policy, great goals, noble objectives, and paid high tribute to parent involvement and choices, but when push came to shove, they were usually under the spell of the superintendent or whatever favorite administrator was talking to them or putting on a presentation at a school committee meeting.

On the other hand, my independent colleagues felt too much pressure from their friends of long standing to respond objectively to the pressure to move in directions that were contrary to the interests of people they know. It's hard to close the school you attended, vote in favor of an outsider when your high school classmate wants the job, oppose the grievance of someone who stood at the polls for you on election day, or pass over someone with "thirty years of service" for a promotion.

Don't think the independents had a monopoly on patronage. The CCA-types were into it just as much - except it was getting good people (their friends or ideological soul mates). History has proven that neither side hired, promoted, or advocated a more competent set of faculty than the other - they were just different: more or less articulate, visionary in the right or wrong direction, etc.

Here are some of the ways the school committee can keep bad things from happening and even turn things around, and some criteria for judging who's going to be more effective on the School Committee.

The School Committee hires the superintendent, evaluates its chief executive, sets objectives, and makes sure they're carried out. It's easy for board members to get bamboozled by slick talking, high promising, charismatic chief executives. Superintendents are a very slick breed, taught to promise whatever it takes to get hired and re-contracted. A key set of criteria include figuring out who can make sure the superintendent delivers. (For example, the current one has been here for two years and we're still waiting for a comprehensive, city-wide curriculum.)

The board does the collective bargaining, not only with teachers, but also with custodians, clerks, cafeteria staff, and - get this - even substitute teachers. This is done behind the scenes - yet it is probably the most important activity they do!

Here's the short version. The Cambridge Teachers Association - the union representing the faculty - looks out for the interests of teachers. They want more money, better hours, less control, and more management of who gets transferred or assigned. Did you see students mentioned yet? Of course not. Despite the rhetoric, the CTA is one of the state's best unions representing their members. They don't represent kids or their parents.

I've been amused by the recent "innovative" tactics recommended by some parents and administrators/panderers for making negotiations more mutually beneficial. There's the "Getting to Yes" tactics of Harvard's Roger Fisher; and there's "collaborative bargaining," too. This is all very nice, but there hasn't been a significant insert to the teachers' contract that empowers parents, holds teachers to higher standards, or gets more for the money in years. Until this year, it's a big, happy, hugging process/party at negotiating time. The union is skillfully waiting for the next election before returning seriously to the table.

The key question for voters: Can your School Committee members be tough, or do they want to make nice - at your expense. Wouldn't it be nice to have some parents involved in evaluating teachers, for example? Wouldn't it provide some real pressure to perform if parents and student evaluations of schools, high school houses, or even teachers were available to other parents so they could make informed judgments (e.g., the Harvard "Confidential Guide to Courses")?

The School Committee also approves the budget, something that includes decisions that impact long range planning and which schools survive or close, what programs are created or shut down, and how much money it will all cost. When they make these decisions, are they thinking about kids, effectiveness, efficiencies, or equity among schools, or are they trying to protect their friends.

Mary Newman, the late state representative who stood for the highest standards of integrity, thoughtfulness, and humanity, used three criteria to measure any candidate for public office:

First: Who is this person running and what is the background that shaped his/her character, experiences, attitudes, and personality?

Second: How does this person think and what process for making decisions does he or she use?

Third, and most importantly: If I had a problem, would this individual care about me, personally?

Those criteria have served me well, but, in addition to those, consider these criteria when you evaluate the literature and the candidates. Remember that candidates forums (and I've moderated two of them this year) only tell you who's good on their feet, not who will serve you well:

1. Will the candidate look beyond their own kid's school? This is the true dirty little secret of the liberal establishment in Cambridge. Look carefully - they always seem to focus on those schools where their own kids are. Then they shift dramatically to focusing on high schools once their own kids advance from the 8th grade.

2. Can this person follow through? If they set a goal, how do you know they'll stick to their issue, get a curriculum or move the superintendent to action. Or are they simply looking for weekly group therapy with six other board members to feel good about our school system.
3. Can they risk being unpopular? To show courage, one has to sit in front of a room full of people and tell the truth, often something people don't want to hear. They need to hire a superintendent who's good for the system, not for their political careers. They need to tell special, "elitist" interests that poor neighborhoods deserve good schools too - and back it up with action. They need to stand up to the special interests - including the unions.
4. Can they see through the bull? When principals tells you how wonderful their schools are, do you take their word for it or ask the right questions? Can you challenge curriculum people to demonstrate why they haven't moved in particular directions? Do you look for outcomes data to measure success? Can you avoid being co-opted by faculty who want you to be their partner and not their board?
5. What would they look for in a superintendent - specifically? And more specifically, if there were a vacancy, would they look inside or outside - and why? (There's no correct answer here - but there are good rationale vs. political pandering.)
6. Do they recognize that Cambridge is plagued with economic, cultural, and racial segregation - problems that are growing - and what will they do about it as it relates to schools?
7. Can they avoid what I like to call "Process Happy Horseshit"? Educational systems are notorious for getting dragged into long processes for planning and doing - or not doing. That's why we don't have a curriculum yet. Too many people processing. Can your favorite candidate find out what's behind the problem and force an outcome - and use the pulpit of the school committee meeting to move things forward.
8. Will they represent the schools credibly in front of external and important audiences including the large employers, the public outside Cambridge, the media, and parents of kids in Cambridge? Will we be proud of these people, or will we spend time apologizing for them to outsiders?
9. Finally, can they say, "No." Peter Gesell (1972-75) was one of the finest people with whom I served on the School Committee. He was a straight shooter and ran part of the Fernald School, so he knew the day to day issues, the politics, and how things really worked. He had the best response to people who sought patronage. He'd say, "Not only can't I vote for you, but I have to vote against you." Of course Peter only lasted two terms, but he's totally at peace with himself. So, don't throw that School Committee vote away. Frankly, based on the literature and the candidates forums on cable, you can make informed and wise choices.

Note: *Glenn Koocher, 50, is a "lifetime Cambridge resident," the spouse of a Cambridge public school teacher, and the father of a CRLS freshman. His two kids graduated from the King Open School. He served on the School Committee for six terms from 1974-1986, the 2nd through 5th of which terms were as a CCA-endorsed member.*

2) Politics along the Trail

In a few short days, Cambridge's biennial municipal elections will be history. With multiple open seats on both the City Council and School Committee, this certainly has not been a repeat of the ho-hum election of 1997. There are many credible candidates and great uncertainty about the outcome. Much will depend on the voter turnout, and at this point it's anyone's guess what that will be. Turnout in 1997 was a historic low. Lest I be accused of making endorsements on these pages while being myself a candidate, I'll restrict myself to a few observations made along the trail.

In past years there have been various slates of candidates in addition to the CCA Slate (Cambridge Civic Association). There has been the Tenant Slate, the Rainbow Slate, the Alliance Slate, and various other minor slates that try to squeeze a little extra efficiency out of our proportional representation election system. This year, only the CCA Slate emerged as a clearly defined slate backed by more than a handful of people. Nonetheless, there are some unofficial slates that are definable, so I may as well do so (and catch some grief):

The CCA Slate

City Council: Kathy Born, Jim Braude, Henrietta Davis, Erik Snowberg, and Robert Winters

School Committee: Melody Brazo, Tad Kenney, Jamiesean Patterson, Susana Segat, Denise Simmons, Alice Turkel, Nancy Walser

The Townie Slate

City Council: Michael Sullivan, Tim Toomey, David Maher, Anthony Galluccio, Dotty Giacobbe, Bob Goodwin, Marjorie Decker, (and possibly) Sonny Peixoto

School Committee: Fred Fantini, Joe Grassi, Don Harding, Jamiesean Patterson, Alvin Thompson, (and possibly) Michael Harshbarger, Denise Simmons, Shawn Burke

The OutaTownie Slate

Alan Nidle (46 Main St., Somerville)

The Anti-Healy Slate

Tim Toomey, Ken Reeves, Katherine Triantafillou, James Williamson, David Hoicka, Dotty Giacobbe, Vince Dixon, Marjorie Decker

[The other candidates (other than fringe candidates) are either OK with City Manager Healy or have chosen not to show their hand.]

The Conservative Slate

Jeff Chase, David Trumbull, Sonny Peixoto

Though there are some candidates who are clearly opposed to rent control and some who are in favor of re-instituting a rigid form of rent control, other candidates have taken more moderate positions such as supporting the preservation of expiring use buildings without advocating for rent controls. The whole thing is very muddy and the question is largely moot at this point.

The best example of backroom politics this year has to be the strategic disendorsements of Kathleen Born and Henrietta Davis by the local chapter of NOW (National Organization of Women). This action made no sense to anyone familiar with Born or Davis and seemed to many to be a strategy to promote

the candidacy of Marjorie Decker, former aide to State Rep. Alice Wolf, and to exact revenge for the vote to elect Frank Duehay mayor and Anthony Galluccio vice-mayor in 1998. Perhaps a box of cigars should be delivered to local NOW activists since they already have the smoke-filled room. Alice Wolf's reputation was certainly not helped by this and other actions and it is likely that there will be repercussions next year.

More out in the open was the arrogant behavior of Helder "Sonny" Peixoto. In the presence of patrons of a Cambridge St. liquor store that had a Toomey sign displayed, candidate Peixoto lashed out at the owner for not displaying signs for fellow Portuguese candidate Peixoto. This and other incidents will, no doubt, cost him votes. Peixoto's decision to run a campaign ad with a photo of himself with State Rep. Barrios without Barrios' consent cemented Peixoto's victory as the most mean-spirited candidate of this election.

One of the most interesting moments for me was when Mayor Frank Duehay spoke at length at a campaign event for Anthony Galluccio. This would have been inconceivable not long ago and may still seem impossible to some. To me this represented an acknowledgement of the role that Galluccio has played in dealing with constituent services through the Mayor's Office. These two men often have very different positions on policy matters, but it is clear that they have developed quite a bit of respect for each other's strengths.

A web site dedicated to rumor, innuendo, and personal attack debuted on Oct 1. It is called the Cambridge Jurinal (to be pronounced, appropriately, like the plumbing fixture) and, unfortunately, is dominated by contributions from anti-development activists. It only serves to do harm to the good efforts of many proponents of growth management.

The slogans this year have run from the predictable to the absurd. David Maher and Kathy Born have both adopted the phrase "common sense" on their literature, partly because it's true and, perhaps, partly to attract some of Sheila Russell's and Frank Duehay's votes their way. Sonny Peixoto has the phrase "the time is now" all over his signs and literature, though many people wonder who fixes his clock. Then there's James Williamson's "take back City Hall" that is particularly ironic. There are many who would like nothing more than to restore some of the effective functioning of some City boards which are routinely disrupted by Williamson's acting out.

Competing definitions for what is "progressive" has been an undercurrent in this year's Council race. It is reminiscent of the statement of a former candidate in the 1991 election who declared, "they eat their own." The best illustration of this occurred when candidates at the Tenants' Forum on Oct 7 spent much of their time taking bites out of one another while the other 14 candidates had dinner at home.

On a personal note, the defining moment of this year's election occurred for me on Sept 29. While my 18-year-old cat lay dying at home, I had to attend a candidate forum organized by the growth management and anti-development advocates. Though I generally enjoy candidate forums, I really didn't want to be there that night. The combination of grief and the hostility

of the questioner was a potent combination that led to a moment of clarity. It caused to me to consider the big picture of my roles as candidate, civic participant, and civic journalist.

Candidates and city officials are human beings - a fact often overlooked by activists in their zeal. We have our good and bad moments, but ultimately we can choose to stay or to go. This election cycle will be remembered by me not so much for the election results as for the death of a beloved pet and the beginning of a relationship with Cynthia and her 11-year old son George. Life trumps politics. This is clarity.

3) June 21 City Council meeting

The main items of this meeting were the passage of the amendments to the Smoking Ordinance and the nighttime ban on all trucks in excess of 2.5 tons except for those trucks originating or with destinations in Cambridge. The latter has been challenged by the Mass. Highway Dept. and neighboring communities.

Though the public comment was dominated by the above issues, several residents spoke on a late order regarding oversight of construction on the WR Grace site in North Cambridge in light of the existence of asbestos in some soil samples at that site.

The nighttime truck ban passes unanimously

All nine councillors had something to say about this issue prior to the expected unanimous vote. Privately, some of the councillors had reservations about the ban and predicted that it would be thrown out in court. They did, however, feel that by passing the ban and facing the court challenges the City would be able to determine to what extent it may be possible to regulate truck traffic in Cambridge in the future.

Councillor Sullivan chose to emphasize the matter of trucks with hazardous cargoes being diverted through Cambridge because they are not permitted on the Mass Pike east of the Allston-Brighton tolls.

Councillor Triantafyllou sympathized with Brattle St. residents and said "we should pursue this on a theoretical, if not practical, level." This was but one indication of the sense among some councillors that this ban might not hold up under litigation but that much would be learned by the process.

Councillor Toomey said he was thrilled that this day had finally arrived and suggested that this would prod other communities to join us. They may instead sue us.

Councillor Born recounted the history of the truck traffic hearing she convened in 1995 that led to the process out of which this truck ban grew. Like Toomey, she suggested that residents of other cities would prod their elected officials to get on board and suggested that this will make it a national issue.

Councillor Davis, Chair of the Traffic and Transportation Committee, told of the hearings she held on this matter and of some of her misgivings about the ultimate success of the ban. She expressed concern that the Mass. Highway Dept. might be vindictive toward Cambridge and that this could hold up funding on some road projects.

Councillor Russell expressed reluctance in light of the court decisions that overturned the Billboard Ordinance from the early 90's and the legal costs that could result from any aggressive defense of the truck ban. Councillor Reeves quoted Frederick Douglass, saying, "Where there is no struggle there is no progress."

Councillor Galluccio suggested that the media would solicit response from our neighbors and that we would be seen as leaders. [There have been newspaper accounts of responses from neighboring cities, but the response has been more of resentment than perceived leadership.]

Mayor Duehay was very appreciative of those who worked on the draft of this ordinance, saying that now the law may have a possibility of being sustained. He reminded all of the fact that the validity of the ban relied on a single court decision in a Plaistow, NH case. He said the Mass. Highway Dept. and Governor would not be pleased. The matter passed 9-0.

The Smoking Ordinance is amended

Though the amendments were passed on an 8-1 vote, the matter was not without some controversy. Councillor Davis voted against the ordinance because she felt it did not go far enough. In a prepared statement, she said, "It doesn't go far enough to assure a smoke free environment for diners in Cambridge restaurants. I'm disappointed that the Public Health Department hasn't come forward with a proposal that safeguards the public's health and reflects the will of the people too on this issue. The leadership of the public health community has been so important in bringing about the changes we've witnessed over the past couple of decades on smoking and living in a smoke free environment. We can't stop now."

Davis cited survey information that said that 96% of Cambridge residents preferred no smoking restaurants or smoking allowed only in a separate, enclosed area. Davis took issue with the provision that allows the Health Department to issue a smoking permit when the bar area is separated from the remainder of a restaurant by a six foot defined area, rather than requiring that the area be enclosed from the remainder of the restaurant. Nearly one quarter of the restaurants in the city have been granted permits allowing smoking in a bar area (though information isn't available distinguishing whether the permitted areas are enclosed or just separated by six feet of space). "I want to see the Ordinance amended and the provision eliminated that allows six feet of defined space between a bar area and restaurant to be considered a sufficient barrier to quality for a smoking permit," said Davis.

Councillor Reeves said, "Everybody in France smokes and they're living pretty old too." He spoke to the matter of free will and human choice. Davis' proposed amendments were defeated with only Councilor Davis and Mayor Duehay voting in the affirmative. An additional amendment from Mayor Duehay was passed requiring signage at entrances showing the percentage of seats where smoking is permitted.

New Rules Passed

The Government Operations Committee, chaired by Councillor Russell, worked for many months to come up with

new rules for the ways in which the City Council conducts its meetings and handles routine matters. The new rules were unanimously adopted at this meeting and commenced at the July 26 City Council meeting.

Some features of the new rules are:

- (a) There will be public comment periods at the beginning of each section of the meeting rather than all at once.
- (b) The order of business has been rearranged to take up the Manager's Agenda and any Calendar items at the beginning of the meeting.
- (c) Communications have been divided into Petitions and Applications, which are open to public comment, and Consent Communications, which are not. [Some people have routinely submitted communications on various far-flung topics just so that they could make a speech at the Council.]
- (d) The Council Orders are now divided into Resolutions (mainly ceremonial such as congratulations, weddings, and death resolutions) and Policy Orders.
- (e) Routine maintenance items are now to be handled administratively.

The new rules will be in effect for the remainder of this year and will be reviewed during that time.

Late in the meeting

Councillor Sullivan initiated a discussion about the response from the City Manager on an order calling for revenue generated by development in one part of the city to be earmarked for open space acquisition in that same part of the city. Some concerns were raised about the progress of the Green Ribbon Open Space Committee in developing criteria for open space acquisition.

There was additional discussion about what steps the City could take to acquire an easement at the Fresh Pond Shopping Center for a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks. The option of commencing work on other railroad crossings in North Cambridge right away was also discussed.

A discussion about the controversial student searches that took place earlier this year dominated the closing moments of this meeting. Several councillors traded anecdotal information about what led to these searches and whether they were warranted. Councillor Triantafillou made the point that students were questioned and searched, in part, because of their associations and not simply because of suspicion of possessing a weapon. The issue of these searches has been, whether warranted or not, one of this year's most emotion-packed issues.

4) July 26 Midsummer City Council meeting

This was the first meeting of the Council under the new rules passed at the previous meeting. Though some aspects were successful, the five public comment periods were a dismal failure with the same people rising to speak at each. My initial reaction 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.

Other items were the continued controversy surrounding the student searches and the ordination of a trimmed-down Planning Board/City Council Backyard Zoning Petition which incorporated some of the elements of the Cook Petition. A petition to amend the Plan E Charter to give the City Council the authority to make appointments to boards and commissions was introduced at this meeting. Its advocates at this meeting were Stash Horowitz, Denise Guerin, Elie Yarden, Joseph Joseph, Vince Dixon, and James Williamson.

The Council passed an appropriation request for \$200,000 for Millenium-related celebrations throughout next year. Councillors Triantafillou and Reeves were less than enthusiastic about the expenditure.

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 Triantafillou supporting it. The matter was reconsidered as the first order of business at the Sept 13 meeting, but the same vote was repeated.

Councillor Toomey had another order that called for the prohibition of any declared candidate from serving on any advisory committee of the Election Commission. The order was directed at this writer because of my former involvement with the Technical Working Committee on Computerization of the Cambridge elections. I resigned from the committee before becoming a candidate. Nonetheless, I am proud of the fact that my ballot analysis and software testing is what led to the discovery of some bugs in the tallying software. Those bugs have now been corrected (not by me!) and we should have a dependable piece of software for the PR elections this week.

The substance of Toomey's order was not controversial. The problem was with his intimation that "the foxes are guarding the chicken coop" and that the TWCC was some kind of secret committee. His statement that "no candidate for office should be dictating how this election is to take place" showed a complete misunderstanding of what a technical advisory group does.

Councillor Toomey had a related order (in the sense that it applied to declared candidates and perceived conflicts) that called on the City to provide links to candidate web sites, to provide assistance to candidates with their sites, and that "this shall be the only place on the City web site where a site prepared by and/or on behalf of a certified candidate is linked." Because of the complexity and possible legal problems with this order, Councillor Russell exercised her charter right to delay it until the next meeting.

The creation of links to candidate sites isn't that controversial since it would be open to all candidates and involves virtually no cost. Assistance to candidates is legally prohibited and it's just a bad idea to burden City staff with this brand of hand-holding. The prohibition of links to other sites is very problematic because it opens up quite a can of worms regarding free speech. The cause of this part of the order was the link to the web site of the publication that you are now reading.

There are links on the City web site to several other organizations whose members are actively involved with political campaigns. On the CCJ site, every effort is made to minimize bias. In fact, links to candidates' e-mail addresses and web sites were made available at the CCJ site before Toomey's order was drafted. Indeed, the fact that this was previously the only site where these addresses and links were available may have been the motivation for Toomey's order. It is disturbing to think that a legitimate public service effort should be met with a desire to obscure its content because a political candidate is involved. By the same logic, City Council meetings should be taken off Cable TV during election season because only the incumbents are featured.

The student search controversy continues

Significant public comment was heard on the matter of the student searches several months earlier. Parents of some of these students spoke passionately on the subject. The agenda item under discussion by the Council was an order by Councillor Triantafillou that called for apologies to the parents. Several councillors took the position that with insufficient information available, it would be inappropriate to make any declaration of wrongdoing by school security personal or the school administration.

As in the previous Council meeting, several councillors offered bits of information about what may or may not have been the facts leading up to the searches. Weapons were found in some lockers but not on the students, and only 2 of 28 were found to have weapons. There are conflicting reports on whether there really was gang activity in the schools.

In the end, Councillor Sullivan offered a substitute order that called for further investigation.

In another matter with racial implications, the mother of a young man charged with assaulting a police officer appealed to the City Council to intervene in order to get the Police Review Board to act swiftly in investigating the legitimacy of the charges against her son.

The Planning Board and Cook Backyard Zoning Petitions

After over two years of revision, the proposed changes to the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance regulating backyard development and related matters finally came to a vote. In the end there were four recommendations that were passed as four separate ordinances. They are as follows:

(1) Increase the minimum rear yard requirement on lots in excess of 100 ft. deep - one foot additional setback for each 4 feet in excess of 100 feet.

[Passed 6-3 with Russell, Sullivan, and Toomey opposed.]

(2) Double the amount of open space required on residential lots and require that the additional open space be permeable.

[Passed 6-3 with Russell, Sullivan, and Toomey opposed.]

(3) Reduce the density of dwelling units in the Res C-1 district by increasing the lot area per dwelling unit from 1200 to 1500 square feet.

[Passed 7-2 with Russell and Toomey opposed.]

(4) Adopt a change in the way accessory structures (garages, carriage houses, arbors, etc.) are regulated in the Res C-1 and

C-2 districts. Structures would have to meet standard setbacks. [Passed 7-2 with Russell and Toomey opposed.]

Following these votes, there was an interesting discussion about the use of accessory structures as Councillor Sullivan moved to pass certain provisions of the Cook petition. At the heart of the discussion was the fact that these structures can now be used for "customary home occupations" plus a selected list that includes architects, dentists, physicians, lawyers, engineers, and massage therapists.

The Cook petition would have prohibited these uses in accessory buildings. At issue was not only the question of whether such activity should take place in accessory buildings but why only these activities should be allowed. For example, the Cook petition would have forbade artists from using such structures for studio space. Councillors Triantafillou and Toomey drew attention to the fact that some plumbers currently work out of their home garages. Toomey referred to this as "a classic class issue."

The vote to pass this additional regulation failed with only Galluccio, Sullivan, Toomey, and Duehay voting for it. [It's not clear why Toomey voted for it after his previous remarks.]

Another provision of the Cook petition that would require below-ground structures to meet the same setbacks as above-ground structures will be reintroduced at a later date by Councillor Born.

5) Oct 18 City Council meeting

This meeting opened with yet another discussion on what is to happen with the median strip on North Mass. Ave. There was general consensus among councillors that much misinformation was being spread about the status of this project. Delays in the sewer work for that section of road are delaying the whole project.

Councillor Sullivan started the discussion about the closing of Barsamian's as a neighborhood food market. Some reports indicated that the market closed because of steep increases in rent charged by a new property owner from Texas. There are also indications that the owners of Barsamian's had overextended themselves when they tried to open a second location and that its failure led to bankruptcy. A report from the Community Development Department was criticized by several councillors for its lack of detail and tone of resignation. The Council voted to send it back for a better effort.

An order urging a Prospect Street building owner to halt eviction proceedings against some tenants brought a parade of speakers to the mike during public comment.

The arrival of the Planning Board and Ordinance Committee reports on two versions of the proposed IPOP extension sets the stage for a vote on the ordinance as soon as November 1.

The meeting ended with the City Council going into Executive Session to discuss litigation relative to the night-time truck ban enacted during the summer. Mercifully brief meeting.

6) Campaign Finance Reports

The following amounts are ranked by expenditure and rounded to the nearest dollar. They represent activity during the period Jan 1, 1999 to Oct 15, 1999. There are often significant expenditures that take place just prior to the election and afterwards as bills are paid. The figures below are current as of Fri, Oct 29, 1999.

City Council Candidates

| Candidate | Prev | Rcpts | Expend | In-kind | Balance |
|---------------|-------|---------------------|--------|---------|---------|
| Reeves | 53 | 30240 | 34501 | | -4208 |
| Galluccio | 723 | 43377 | 31124 | | 13027 |
| Sullivan | 19288 | 41202 | 27189 | | 33302 |
| Davis | 4540 | 26321 | 26674 | | 4187 |
| Maher | 0 | 28354 | 26573 | | 1781 |
| Toomey | 2469 | 28685 | 23280 | | 7874 |
| Born | 2124 | 23580 | 21671 | | 4033 |
| Braude | 0 | 21355 | 20745 | | 610 |
| Triantafillou | 3647 | 23156 | 18090 | | 8713 |
| Trumbull | 0 | 17218 | 13381 | | 3837 |
| Decker | 0 | 28903 | 13199 | 940 | 15704 |
| Peixoto | 0 | 8810 | 8478 | 950 | 332 |
| Goodwin | 0 | 8425 | 5427 | 265 | 2998 |
| Hoicka | 0 | 2407 | 2407 | 21 | 0 |
| Russell | 2699 | 0 | 1816 | | 883 |
| Chase | 0 | 1145 | 1023 | | 122 |
| Williamson | 0 | 909 | 919 | 280 | 90 |
| Winters | 0 | 2276 | 148 | | 2128 |
| Snowberg | 0 | 425 | 132 | 425 | 293 |
| Dixon | 15 | 300 | 0 | | 315 |
| Jones | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Malone | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Nidle | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Christenson | | DID NOT FILE REPORT | | | |
| Giacobbe | | DID NOT FILE REPORT | | | |

School Committee Candidates

| Candidate | Prev | Rcpts | Exp | In-kind | Balance |
|-------------|------|---------------------|------|---------|---------|
| Simmons | 556 | 10341 | 8999 | | 1899 |
| Walser | 0 | 13831 | 7938 | | 5893 |
| Segat | 1855 | 8940 | 7599 | | 3196 |
| Turkel | 3683 | 6236 | 5977 | | 3942 |
| Brazo | 0 | 4613 | 5797 | | -1184 |
| Kenney | 0 | 5126 | 5009 | | |
| Harshbarger | 0 | 11835 | 4453 | | 7382 |
| Burke | 0 | 472 | 1543 | | -1071 |
| Harris | 89 | 0 | 0 | | 89 |
| Fantini | | DID NOT FILE REPORT | | | |
| Grassi | | DID NOT FILE REPORT | | | |
| Harding | | DID NOT FILE REPORT | | | |
| Patterson | | DID NOT FILE REPORT | | | |
| Thompson | | DID NOT FILE REPORT | | | |

Political Action Committees

| Committee | Prev | Rcpts | Exp | In-kind | Balance |
|------------------------|------|-------|------|---------|---------|
| SPOA | | | 4619 | | |
| CCA Election Committee | 519 | 6135 | 3220 | | 3434 |
| Cambr. Progr. Forum | 0 | 95 | 1090 | | -995 |
| CCURE | 0 | 551 | 214 | | 337 |
| Alliance for Change | 27 | 40 | 35 | | 31 |
| No on Question 1 Comm. | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |

7) Preview of Nov 1 City Council meeting

This Monday's meeting has a number of noteworthy items:

- (a) A communication from the City Manager requesting the appropriation of \$2,500,000 to CDD from Free Cash to be used as a loan guarantee towards the purchase of 95 units of affordable housing in Areas 1, 3 and 4.
- (b) A communication from the City Manager requesting the appropriation of \$65,000 from Free Cash to provide funds to continue environmental testing at Russell Field.
- (c) A possible vote on the proposed "Asbestos Protection Ordinance" that grew out of concerns about construction on the WR Grace site in North Cambridge.
- (d) Likely vote on two versions of the proposed IPOP extension.
- (e) Several policy orders from Councillor Born asking for:
 - (i) a report on what measures the City might take to facilitate the conversion of market rate housing to limited equity with the goal of providing an increase to affordable housing stock in the City.
 - (ii) a report on the current "Linkage" program which requires commercial building projects to provide funds to the Affordable Housing Trust for the development of new affordable housing in the City.
 - (iii) investigation of the possibility of establishing a Cambridge Community Loan Fund similar to the Boston Community Loan Fund which provides funding for affordable housing.
- (f) An Ordinance Committee report on how the proposed condominium ordinance should be changed to comport with the recent Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision which stuck down Boston's condominium protection ordinance.
- (g) A report from the Cable TV, Telecommunications, and Electricity Committee on the issue of open access for the Cable License.
- (h) A letter from the Massachusetts Historical Commission informing the City of the possible cancellation of the grant allocation of \$100,000 to the City of Cambridge for restoration work at Cambridge City Hall.

8) Miscellany

There was a Special City Council meeting on Mon, Sept 27 to approve the filing to the Dept. of Revenue that will determine

the residential and commercial tax rates for the next year. Details of that meeting will be reported in the next issue.

At that meeting, members of the group CCURE trying to put a rent control initiative petition on this November's municipal ballot tried unsuccessfully to have the City Council vote to put the matter on the ballot. Though it was already questionable for the matter to be voted upon at a Special Meeting called for another purpose, the vote to suspend the rules to take the vote failed on a 5-4 vote. Six votes are needed to suspend the rules. Councillors Galluccio, Russell, Sullivan, and Toomey voted against suspension.

This meeting was followed by a roundtable discussion on the City's Capital Plan, including the new Main Library and Police Station. No votes were taken at the roundtable meeting. It was not televised and there was no public comment.

Cambridge Civic Calendar:

Mon, Nov 1

5:00pm **Special Event Presentations** Welcome youth exchange delegation from the Sister City of Yerevan Armenia; Presentation of breast cancer and colon cancer prevention stamps. (Sullivan Chamber)

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

Tues, Nov 2

5:00am to 8:00pm **Cambridge Municipal Elections**

The Count will commence at the Cambridge Senior Center shortly after the polls close. It is expected that the unofficial tally of first-place votes will be announced Tuesday evening. The full process of vote transfers and the election of the City Council and School Committee is expected to take place on Wednesday.

Mon, Nov 15

11:00am The **Finance Committee** will conduct a public meeting to receive an update from the City Manager on the matter of whether the City should accept the provisions of Chapter 32, Sections 90A, B & C. (Ackermann Room)

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

Tues, Nov 16

7:00pm The **Rules Committee** will conduct a public hearing to receive public comment regarding the Temporary Rules changes adopted by the City Council on June 21. (Sullivan Chamber)

Wed, Nov 17

5:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public hearing on a petition filed by Judith M. Brown et al., to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge by creating a new Special District 2 in the Linear Park area to insert it in Article 17.00. (Sullivan Chamber)

6:00pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public hearing relative to the Planning Board's refiled petition to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge for a proposed Special District 2 amendment to the zoning in the Linear Park area. (Sullivan Chamber)

6:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public hearing relative to amending the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge in Section 11.50 - Harvard Square Overlay District and relative to Chapter 2.78 of the Municipal Code entitled "Historical Buildings and Landmarks" to be amended by inserting a subsection at the end of Section 2.78.050. (Sullivan Chamber)

Mon, Nov 22

5:30pm The **City Council** will hold a **Roundtable Discussion**. NO PUBLIC COMMENT (Sullivan Chamber)

Tues, Nov 23

5:30pm The **Traffic and Transportation Committee** will conduct a public meeting to review the proposed loss of the median strip on Massachusetts Avenue and the impact on pedestrian and traffic safety for the North Massachusetts Avenue Design Project. (Sullivan Chamber)

Mon, Dec 6

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

Tues, Dec 7

5:30pm The **Civil and Human Rights Committee** will conduct a public hearing to discuss whether the ordinance and procedures of the Police Review Board should be changed to increase its effectiveness. (Sullivan Chamber)

Wed, Dec 8

5:00pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public hearing to continue discussion on the proposed condominium conversion ordinance. (Sullivan Chamber)

5:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct an additional hearing to continue discussion on proposed changes to the Plan E. Charter. (Sullivan Chamber)

Wed, Dec 8

6:30pm The **Ordinance Committee** will conduct a public hearing on the petition to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge in Section 4.21.d relative to accessory use. (Sullivan Chamber)

Mon, Dec 13

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

Thurs, Dec 16

5:00pm The **Environment Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss material regarding a proposal to alleviate cigarette littering. (Ackermann Room)

5:30pm The **Environment Committee** will conduct a public meeting to discuss the decision by the MDC to extend permission for Arthur D. Little and/or new owners of ADL property to use parkland/wetland for a parking lot. (Ackermann Room)

Mon, Dec 20

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

Mon, Dec 27

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