
Cambridge Civic Journal

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BACK TO BASICS - PART TWO

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1) April at the Council

April 3, 2000 City Council meeting

This meeting opened with a status report by Census officials. Here are some of the reported facts:

- (a) It costs taxpayers \$3 per form when received by mail vs. \$27-36 per form for households that require a census-taker to visit. It is mandated that a census worker must go to every non-respondent household.
- (b) Response rates (as of April 3) were 49% in Cambridge, 53% nationally, 58% for Massachusetts, 61% for Middlesex County, and 45% for Boston. Response rates range from 38.7% in East Cambridge and 39% in Area 4 to 55.3% in North Cambridge.
- (c) Every person undercounted results in an estimated loss of \$1200 per year in federal money. It has been estimated that Cambridge had a 4-5,000 undercount in 1990, in part due to difficulties in counting students at the universities.

Public comment had its moments. Roy Bercaw took issue with Million Mom March statistics that 13 children per day and 4745 per year are killed by guns in the United States. He called this hyperbole and opined that political movements use numbers to distort their positions. Susan Teshu and Councillor Decker verified that these statistics were actually conservative. Though supportive of the Million Mom March, Councillor Braude took issue with their goal of limiting guns sales to one per month, noting that this allows one to purchase a dozen guns per year.

Susan Lindsay-Mello spoke in support of Councillor Decker's order asking for a task force to look at tax appraisals on those who provide affordable housing.

Peter Valentine submitted two communications for this meeting. The first one was relative to "an astrological configuration about to solidify" and the second called banning Canola Oil in stores and restaurants in Cambridge. [I'm still trying to figure out whether this is performance art or simple insanity.] Valentine rambled on about the poisonous effects of Canola Oil and about the hum in VCR's and boomboxes after you shut them off as a conspiracy by utility companies to get

you to pay more for electricity. "On is on and off is off," he said. He then referred to planes flying overhead and, in his self-appointed role as "National Officer in Charge" ordered the arrest of all federal aviation officials. Uh, yeah.

Elie Yardin endorsed the idea discussed at the March 27 Roundtable that the Planning Board sit down with the City Council before any petition comes to a vote. On the report on the distribution of affordable housing in Cambridge, he said that a city that cannot house its citizens may not qualify for the name "city." He expressed support for Councillor Decker's order regarding housing and tax breaks. This order calls for tax breaks for homeowners who keep rents affordable. She and Councillor Sullivan had another related order to look into the City's method of assessing the value of assistant living facilities that serve low and moderate-income residents.

The "ten minute recess" lasted 27 minutes this time.

A report on the location of affordable housing projects in the City was referred to the City Council's Housing Committee.

A loan order for \$500,000 for the City's share of sewer separation costs at Alewife passed unanimously.

Councillor Braude's announcement of an April 6 Living Wage Rally at Harvard brought spirited responses by Mayor Galluccio and Councillor Decker. Mayor Galluccio ragged on Harvard for hiring outside contractors. Decker was very bold in urging Harvard's President Rudenstein to approve a Living Wage. "If it does not pass, they will be held accountable on the museum, the Knafel Center, etc. There are a lot of things Harvard still needs from us. People who work at Harvard cannot afford to live in the city. We will hold Harvard accountable at every corner."

April 10, 2000 City Council meeting

Though not discussed by the Council, the Green Ribbon Open Space Committee Report arrived at the City Council at this meeting. The report was the subject of a hearing on June 7 before the Public Facilities, Art, and Celebrations Committee.

School Committeeman Joe Grassi spoke during public comment on the condition of Donnelly Field and its overburdened role as the only park with multiple playing fields east of Harvard Square. A member of the Green Ribbon Open Space Committee, Mr. Grassi was accompanied by several people affiliated with the East Cambridge Little League. He announced his desire to meet individually with each of the councillors, claiming the Green Ribbon Report "does not represent what the true needs are in the city." He asserted that the neighborhood of East Cambridge was left out entirely in the report. [Note - I also served on the Green Ribbon Committee and remain baffled by Mr. Grassi's assertions. Though no specific location was identified, one of the top priority recommendations was "the creation of 3 to 4 multipurpose fields that would accommodate soccer, field hockey, and

lacrosse equally. If possible, these fields should be located in the eastern half of Cambridge.”]

Ellen Mass, Michael Isenberg, John Walker, Deborah Kirchner, Ralph Yoder, Rebecca Ramsay, and Joe Joseph spoke on matters relating to the Alewife Reservation.

Susan Scott, Peter Payack, Don Harding, and Arthur Nugent spoke on the inadequacy of Donnelly Field, on the Green Ribbon Report, and on youth sports.

James Williamson spoke about Lori Berenson’s imprisonment in Peru. Bill Jones told several entertaining tales of Al Vellucci back in the 1940’s. Joe Joseph spoke on asbestos on the WR Grace site and in Easthampton and North Billerica. He argued for additional testing of soil on the Grace site and asserted that the EPA was very interested in this site.

Councillor Braude praised the Friends of Alewife Reservation for their consciousness-raising. He told of having driven by this area hundreds of times before getting a tour with Ralph Yoder and of having never appreciated what is there. In a rather charming moment, he recounted a story of his daughters’ bodies “vibrating with excitement” when they saw a cormorant.

Councillor Sullivan used his Charter Right to postpone consideration of an order from Councillors Braude and Decker seeking legal opinions on the jurisdiction of Cambridge regarding notice and affordable housing impacts related to the change of the Cambridgeport Bank to Port Financial Corporation. The order asked the City Manager to seek information from Port Financial on the percentage of depositors who participated in the stock offering, the level of participation, the percentage of stock purchased by Cambridge depositors, and a demographic breakdown of the stockholders. The order further sought a legal opinion on whether the City could require a community impact statement from this or any other bank wishing to convert to stock or merge with another bank. Finally, it called on the Mayor to convene a task force to address the commitment of all banks in Cambridge to investing in the city and in its top priorities, particularly affordable housing.

Councillor Born spoke on her order calling on the Manager to contact WR Grace to ask if tremolite asbestos was processed in North Cambridge, the kind featured in recent news reports on 60 Minutes and elsewhere. “The more we know, the more we realize there is something to be worried about,” she said.

April 24, 2000 City Council meeting

Public Comment consisted of only three individuals this time. Bill Jones offered his usual wisdom. Elie Yardin spoke about racism in the context of appointments to the Living Wage Advisory Committee and the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study Committee. He noted that over 30% of Cambridge elementary schoolchildren are African-American compared to just 7% of Cambridge schoolteachers. He also asserted that the fewest African-American teachers were at those schools with greatest number of African-American students. He inquired why some people who were opposed to the Living Wage Ordinance were appointed to the Living Wage Advisory Committee.

Sarah Klipfel, Manager of Government Affairs for the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, voiced concern about an

order concerning the Cambridgeport Bank. Calling the bank one of most responsible corporate citizens, she inquired why this bank and other local banks were being asked to defend themselves.

The “ten minute recess” lasted 22 minutes.

Regarding the appointments to the Living Wage Advisory Committee, the City Manager explained the role of the committee and said there was just one request for waiver pending. The appointees are: Gerald Bergman, Merri Ansara, David Borrus, Jenny Ruducha, Daniel O’Neill, Sarah Klipfel, Christopher Mackin, David Slaney, and Gail Enman.

Councillor Toomey asked about the backgrounds of the appointees to the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study Committee. He expressed concern that “some may be affiliated with MIT” and that he knew of only one life-long Cambridge resident among the appointees. They are: Phyllis Rawlins, Michael Cantalupa (Boston Properties), Peter Berry, Peter Nichols (Beal Companies), Carole Bellew, Jim Gascoigne (Cambridge Technology Partners), Mary Ann Donofrio, Jeffrey Milman (The Cambridge Company), Deborah Kirchwey, Steven Marsh (MIT Real Estate), Shannon Larkin, John Allen (East Cambridge Savings Bank), Douglas Ling, Barry Zevin, and Lisa D’Ambrosio.

On the Port Financial order (Charter Right #1), Councillor Born spoke of concern that reorganization may signal a diminution of the bank’s commitment to affordable housing. She amended the order to ask CDD and the Neighborhood and Long-term Planning Committee to meet to discuss the bank’s investing in the City, especially in affordable housing, and to invite the presidents of all of Cambridge’s banks to testify on their history vis-a-vis affordable housing in the city.

Councillor Braude said this would be a meeting jointly chaired with the Council’s Housing Committee. He criticized the Chamber for voicing unhappiness with this proposal without approaching the makers of the order (Braude and Decker) in advance. He added that from what he’d learned of the Cambridgeport Bank, he’d be the first to congratulate them. He said he’d been advised that 1/3 of the depositors of the bank were Cambridge residents and asked what percentage of the ownership of the new entity would be in the hands of Cambridge residents. Councillor Decker said the intent of the order was to understand the important role played by these banks in affordable housing in the City. On the Chamber’s comments, she said the history of the Chamber until recently as unimpressive and welcomed the new leadership of Tom Lucey.

Councillor Reeves was especially critical of the Chamber, saying that Cambridge’s business community has never seemed to organize in such a way that the largest businesses call the shots. “Sometimes the narrowness of interest is kind of mind-boggling,” he said, stressing the importance of the business-civic discourse. He asserted that the Chamber had shown no leadership in Cambridge for a long time and expressed hope that the Chamber would change and become more leadership-oriented and less reactionary. He said that the Chamber in Boston has been a model of how a whole City should be

involved in a discussion. Noting that Boston and Cambridge were about to host the National League of Cities Conference, he said that we need a Chamber that can help to host major events. The Boston Chamber will play a major role in the NLC event.

Councillor Braude smoothed things out by facetiously adding, "I have no intention of forgiving the Chamber for what they did tonight."

The School Department Budget

In reference to the budget approved by the Cambridge School Committee, Councillor Born called for a detailed account of cuts at the high school. She spoke of rumors of programs that will not be there next year and asked how information will be given to the public and the parents.

Mayor Galluccio spoke of the difficult discussion on redesign of the high school. He said he supported the decisions "around the budget" with respect to the high school. He said that some programs would have to be cut and that the Principal needs to be supported and of the unexpected costs of redesign.

Councillor Born said that though she appreciated the decision to not micromanage, if the budget is premised on very significant changes she would like to know what those changes are. She referred to the lack of information and the "uneasiness rippling through the high school community."

Councillor Reeves said that the city needs to understand where the School Committee is on restructuring at the high school. He said that two-thirds of students are not prospering. He referred to the "significant bravery in hiring a principal who has moved like Moses... Often, a good school is built on the extraordinary vision of one leader. Some want us to embrace a process to get the whole committee to buy into the vision." He said that we were walking into the unknown and that "if people are feeling queasy, this seems to be the intent of the process."

Councillor Toomey noted that the School Department has a budget over \$106 million for less than 7500 students, saying this amounts to \$16,000 per pupil. [A little algebra says you'd need fewer than 6626 students for this figure.] "We should be able to get the job done for all the students in the Cambridge Public Schools. I respect the decisions of the School Committee and the Mayor. It doesn't compute when we ask changes to be made and we knock it."

Mayor Galluccio said that CRLS Principal Paula Evans has taken the charge for crisp, quick, serious change. "The City had enough courage to ask for equity for all programs. It will be a detriment to all elected officials if there is a lack of support for the Principal. This is the most difficult undertaking for the City. Paula Evans didn't want to make those kinds of cuts, but this was more costly than she expected. Change is always difficult. It's always easier to not change. Let's give this redesign a chance."

The "Welcome Wagon"

Councillor Braude introduced an order calling for the creation of a "welcome wagon" for new residents. This led to a lengthy discussion among councillors about how new residents could be introduced and integrated into civic life in Cambridge. Mayor Galluccio suggested that in this form of government,

there is confusion on how much outreach should be done by the administration. Councillor Braude referred to the "Bowling Alone" essay (and book) by Robert Putnam of the Kennedy School of Government. [To read more, here's a good place to start: <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/putnam.html>] Joking about the political benefits of contacting new residents, Braude said, "I personally will do the outreach to all new residents." Mayor Galluccio countered with, "On your tab."

Councillor Davis observed that John McKnight of Northwestern gives a better assessment than Bob Putnam. She spoke of McKnight's concept of "the fabric of connectedness" and of an exercise he's done in some neighborhoods of Chicago where they are "truly doing community development." Davis said it might not be that people are bowling alone, but rather that they are doing other things together.

Councillor Born said that though she could not add to the social theory, she read in the NY Times that 40% of all households and 70% of households with \$50,000 incomes or greater are connected to the Internet. She said a "virtual welcome wagon" could reach a lot of residents and that there is no section on the City web page for those new to the city.

Councillor Davis linked this discussion to her order for an integrated public information program. Councillor Born responded that public information is a good concept, but a bit dry. She suggested a picture of a welcome wagon on the City web page, coupons and samples to local businesses, and a free ticket to a City Council meeting.

Mayor Galluccio joked that "everything you read in the NY Times is social theory." Councillor Maher said that we could be doing a user-friendlier job of selling city services. He said the "welcome wagon" might be a good way for new people to learn about the history of the city, noting Sarah Boyer's books. [Note: I'll choose effectiveness over user-friendliness any day.]

Councillor Reeves recalled Ed Cyr proposing this 11 years ago. He noted that one could go to a neighborhood meeting and have people who have been here for five generations and another meeting where nobody has been here more than a few years. He gave an example in Riverside where no one had any knowledge of the history of the Treeland site [now Mahoney's]. He said, "In Mid-Cambridge, the number of people who know each other is not a great number. Some people who come to the meetings know each other, but others are bowling alone."

Councillor Decker said that her mother is in a bowling league, one with a strong history of Cambridge residents but which is now in Somerville. She said that Braude would be welcome if he's looking for a league. She also spoke in support of Sarah Boyer's oral history books, the next one of which is to focus on East Cambridge.

Councillor Born had an order addressing the increase in drug-related activity in Area 4. Reeves recalled the meeting last fall at the Margaret Fuller House following a drive-by shooting. There was a packed house and an explicit promise for added police presence in that neighborhood until drug activity diminished or ceased. Reeves said the police presence has diminished, but the drug activity has resurged, suggesting a

breach of promise. "Police have argued that if you put a police car on one corner it will move several blocks away. I argued that we should do it until it moves right out of the city. After that I got a call from the mayor of neighboring city. Get it, in particular, out of Area 4." [Note - I spend many nights on Pine Street in Area 4 and can testify that area residents are responsible for much of this resurgence in drug activity.]

Councillor Decker said, "I live in the heart of where drug-dealing and prostitution occurs in Area 4. I live on the first floor. I can touch it." She spoke of the interplay between undercover police and uniformed officers where, in long-term investigations, uniformed police must back off while undercover police are involved. She said \$70,000 police overtime has been spent in Area 4 and that some police have been very responsive. "It's important to hear exactly what the neighborhood expects, what is realistic, and what these commitments mean. This is an issue I'm happy to jump up and down on. We need a more thoughtful discussion. There is confusion within the police department about what the expectations are."

Councillor Reeves added, "Why is there more drug-dealing at Columbia and Washington, Washington and Pine, Harvard and Pine. We are in our first decade of 'community policing.' I had occasion to attend a meeting about Central Square. How do you get the people who are drinking on the bench to not drink there? At some point, you have to ask why when you're spending over \$25 million on police and the only two issues you got are drug-dealing at a given corner and who's sitting on a given bench can't get resolved. I'm beginning to get concerned about the real safety of the people of Cambridge. I was raking leaves in my flowerbed and found someone's wallet. An intern at Cambridge Hospital was robbed by 8 people at Harvard and Hancock, half a block from my house, possibly at gunpoint. My own house got broken into this year. Where is this effective deployment? I see brand new faces with no idea of what has gone on before. There is no continuity. There is nothing called management that I can see. I can't attend any more meetings on how to get people off the bench at Libby's. The owner insists they're buying nothing at Libby's. If I attended two meetings in Area 4 with the same leadership, I'd probably faint. The news that 8 people robbed someone half a block from my house doesn't encourage me."

2) The Budget Hearings - April 26, May 3, May 9

There were three principal budget hearings leading up to the vote on May 15 to approve the budget. Several amendments to the original budget arrived on the day of the vote, including additional funds for renovation of the Maynard-Fletcher School. The FY01 Budget is available online as a 2.5 megabyte PDF file at <http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/resources/budget01.pdf>.

The April 26 hearing began with public comments by Gerald Bergman on the Public Investment Capital Budget and its relation to the combined Fletcher-Maynard School set to open this fall. One estimate for necessary renovations for the school is \$12.7 million. Bergman drew attention to the inadequacy of this school that is to house 400 schoolchildren at Maynard-Fletcher, an inadequate facility. He contrasted the minimal

investment for renovation of the school to the \$10 million set aside for a new public services building and renovation work at City Hall.

Shortly into the hearing, Chairman Michael Sullivan announced that former State Representative Alvin Thompson had passed away and a moment of silence was held in his memory.

City Manager's Message and Budget Overview

The operating budget for FY01 of \$296,466,580 is a 3.1% increase over FY00. The proposed Capital Budget for FY01 is \$43,048,345. The tax levy to support this budget will be \$178,048,345 million, subject to state approval, up 8.5% over the current year. About 35% of this levy increase is expected to come from revenue from new construction. This will bring the increase down to 5.5% for existing properties. There will be an increase in tax-supported debt that will increase in subsequent years. "Everyone has their favorite projects," said City Manager Robert Healy. "One has to develop a budget with fiscal responsibility. It's not possible to fund everything that everyone would like to have funded. There is a much larger increase in the tax levy than in recent years and a much lower pool of free cash. There are continuing capital projects that require debt service on an annual basis. We must be able to afford that which we desire to do. Future projects such a Police Station and Library can only be supported by property tax-supported debt service. We'll be dangerously close to the levy limit."

Treasurer Jim Maloney amplified the Manager's words concerning growth of debt service in coming years, noting that the City plans to sell an additional \$16 million in debt this July.

Cable TV - \$394,665

Calvin Lindsay, new Director of the Office of Cable Television answered councillors' questions about content on CCTV [which maybe should be renamed LQTV], editorial policy and programming enhancement on the Municipal Channel, and vacuous programming from the School Dept. Channel. Councillor Reeves noted that the same "Gang Peace" tape had been running continuously for four weeks.

Councillor Davis heartily endorsed Calvin Lindsay's intention to draw from the talents of the independent film community in Cambridge. In response to her question about how many people have Cable TV and make use of the municipal station in Cambridge, Mr. Healy said that 22,000 households in Cambridge had Cable TV (about half) and that 6% have watched the municipal station at some point.

Regarding the franchise with MediaOne, Lisa Peterson said that the RFP had been issued to MediaOne and that they had until mid-June to respond, followed by a four-month negotiation process. It is expected that a new license will be issued in the fall. Negotiations are ongoing with RCN for a separate license.

Councillor Born asked about the requirement we placed on the transfer of the MediaOne license to ATT that would require access to their Broadband service by other Internet service providers. Mr. Healy reported that MediaOne/ATT appealed the City's denial of the transfer to the Dept. of Telecommunications and Energy and that the appeal had not yet been heard.

[Note - On June 28, the Boston Globe reported that a planned November ballot question that would have required open access to high-speed cable Internet connections in Massachusetts was dropped after proponents reached a compromise with ATT, the measure's leading foe. ATT agreed in principle to open its networks in Massachusetts to other Internet service providers by mid-2002 if they can come to terms with other ISP's. The Globe article reported that nationally the movement for open access laws and local ordinances had stalled, especially after a ruling by a federal appeals court overturning a Portland, Ore., bylaw requiring open access. The article also reported that "Four Massachusetts communities that tried this spring to impose open access requirements as a condition of transferring MediaOne franchises to ATT were rebuffed by the state Department of Telecommunications and Energy, which said they had no legal authority to do so."]

Community Development: \$4,091,105

CDD Director Beth Rubenstein introduced members of the CDD staff and, in response to questions from Councillor Decker, said that CDD now employs 58 people - 43 planners, 6 other professionals, and 9 support staff. This includes housing specialists - 8 staff, 1 administrator, and 2 rehab specialists.

Bob Healy explained some of the history of Just-A-Start and its affiliation with CDD. "This is where institutional memory comes in handy," he said. "It began as part of the Wellington-Harrington and Cambridge Redevelopment Authority operations. The two incumbents are still there - Gordan Gottsche and Van Spanos, originally funded by CRA. A subsequent audit said they could no longer be funded from CRA, so Gordan came to my predecessor and talked himself into being included in the CDD budget and he's been there ever since. I was with him there."

Councillor Maher inquired about the non-compensation of members of voluntary boards, particularly the Planning Board, in light of the time commitment required. Councillor Born, contemplating several complicated zoning petitions set to come before the City Council at the July meeting, expressed her willingness to hold working meetings of the Ordinance Committee prior to that, especially if the Planning Board recommendations were available prior to the meeting.

In response to questions from Councillor Davis about whether the City would consider getting into the shuttle business, Mr. Healy responded, "The Manager doesn't like built-in operating deficits."

Regarding sewer work and surface improvements on Mass. Ave. between Lafayette Square and the Charles River, Beth Rubenstein stated that the work is underway is scheduled to be completed by the end of this calendar year. Bob Healy noted that the Cambridgeport Roadways projects might be a bit iffy since we'd have to battle at the State House for the funding.

[Note - I subsequently received a message from Bill Deignan, TIP Coordinator/Transportation Planner at CDD saying that the sewer/storm work on Mass Ave. from Lafayette Square to the river is starting now and may be mostly complete by the end of the calendar year. This contract does not include the surface

work. MassHighway will likely bid this work in October and commence construction in the fall or spring 2001, depending on funding prioritization. The Cambridgeport Roadways project is listed as a high priority project in TEA-21, the latest major federal transportation legislation, but does not get prioritized for funding until the design is complete and the project is 'ready to go.' Completing of the design is anticipated before October 2001, and if the project is listed in fiscal year 2001 on the TIP, MassHighway could advertise the project for construction as soon as the design is complete.]

Public Works: \$18,124,190

Though normally one of the longest in the annual budget hearings, DPW was in and out quickly this year. The most questions dealt with policies on selling graves at the Cambridge Cemetery.

[Personal Gripe: The City advertises its Graffiti Hotline at 349-INFO and promises that messages will be checked several times daily, reported to the police, and followed up. On two separate occasions in mid-June, I reported instances of graffiti on the front wall of the Longfellow School and in the immediate neighborhood. The calls were not checked until days later and by then the graffiti had spread, including my VW Bus. I finally received a call back and was told that the report on the graffiti on the school would be directed to the School Department. Almost four three weeks have passed since then and nothing has happened. I get two messages from this. First, some staff in the DPW do not understand the concept of follow-through. Second, the School Department moves like a glacier. In contrast, the graffiti on the newly carved elm tree stump on Lee Street was removed within a day, probably due to Arborist Larry Acosta or Mitch Ryerson, the artist who carved the stump.]

Water Department: \$14,744,610

Managing Director Sam Corda and City Manager Healy reported that the new water treatment plant is on schedule to reopen at the end of this year or the beginning of next year. There will be a period of about 30 days after completion of the plant when we will continue to use MWRA water while we make sure all the systems are working.

Councillor Born asked whether the cost of water would go down. Mr. Healy and Deputy City Manager Rich Rossi said that 16 Water Department positions would be added when the plant goes back into operation and that this is a much larger plant than before with better chemical feed processes. He added that over time there would be increased power costs and labor costs, so no windfall savings will be seen. Mr. Healy noted that the MWRA would soon be faced with a huge debt service, so we still will be cheaper.

Inspectional Services: \$1,924,045

Commissioner Robert Bersani addressed some recent controversies over the issuance of building permits, the reclassification of a zoning specialist position, and the difficulty residents have in getting information about who's building something, who owns whatever plot of land, etc. In response to a question from Councillor Davis on the multi-family inspection

program, Bersani said it would take several years to get through that program. It operates on a five-year cyclical basis.

Police Department: \$26,872,395

This was by far the most time-consuming hearing of the entire budget process with Councillor Reeves repeating himself over and over again as he tried the patience of Police Commissioner Ronnie Watson. This was followed by a tiresome exchange between Councillor Decker and the Manager and Commissioner over promotions within the Police Department.

Councillor Reeves gave a carbon copy of his speech two days earlier at the Council meeting on drugs in Area 4, drinking on the bench in front of Libby's Liquor in Central Square, of a burglary at his house, and of a robbery near his house.

Commissioner Watson explained that it's not just one bench in Central Square. Libby's is one of two stores selling liquor [in Central Square] and they say they are not the one selling. "We can not solve all social issues. Our job is to enforce the law and we do a good job of it. We are making an impact."

Ken Reeves answered with, "What if we didn't spend the \$25 million? Would we still have these four incidents?" To this, Watson responded, "We'd have a lot more. Do you expect the State Police to cover Cambridge?"

Reeves continued to dwell on the Libby's bench. "I don't know why we're having the meetings. I don't see them gathered up in Union Square or in Boston... I have a different idea of what public safety is... If the reality is that there are guns in America and therefore there are guns in Cambridge, then I don't know what I am supporting."

Watson responded, "These are people with addictions... We are constantly aware of what goes on in Central Square and in Area 4. I was surprised to see at the Council meeting Monday night of all this hysteria in Area 4." He added that an extra police car was added to Area 4 and paid overtime to tune of \$80,000. "There were arrests there last weekend. Some think that putting a car on the corner will drive crime away. Some of the problem is coming from people residing in Area 4, not coming from outside. We have an increased uniformed presence in the area. A request to have a car there 24 hours a day is not a reasonable use of resources."

Reeves - "One day I'll write a book about Libby's bench or Columbia and Washington. It's very rare to see the same leader appear from the Police Department. Is there not a way to deploy the same people, to keep the same person on an issue until the problem is solved?"

Bob Healy explained that the major problem with continuity is the schedule the officers have negotiated for themselves under collective bargaining. We are unique in how the hours from 3pm to 7am are covered. "I have tried my darnedest to renegotiated these shifts. They just won't give it up. It's absolutely impossible to get consistency with that work schedule."

After Reeves repeated his four points one more time, Mr. Healy suggested there was some unfairness. On the chronic issue at Libby's, Healy suggested that the criminal justice system doesn't handle these very well. "We have impacted the

drug problem in Area 4. We have not eradicated the problem. I don't think we will ever eradicate drugs. A housebreak is very difficult to solve. There was a party next to you that evening. Crime has gone down in Cambridge even more than in the rest of America. It's unfair to criticize the Police Department based on these four incidents."

Reeves - "The facts do speak for themselves."

On the "Driving While Black" problem, Reeves told of one resident who complains that the same officer gives him tickets all the time. This led to a discussion of whether Cambridge was planning to join a statewide effort to report the race of those who are stopped. Comm. Watson said there was no such reporting at this time and that there could be difficulties in implementing this since race is no longer listed on a driver's license. This requires police to ask a person's ethnicity and this can lead to more complaints. He said there is no system in place to capture every police stop or to take a driver's license and swipe it to record the data of the driver. He said that if such a system were developed, the Police Department would have no problem with it and that the Police would have a database of everyone who received a citation.

Reeves said that he knew the aforementioned young man's family and that there were always two sides to a story. To this, Watson said that he had given the booking sheet of this young man to Internal Affairs. "I cannot discuss it here. If you come on Friday and he gives the OK, I will describe quite frankly the circumstances of his arrest."

Reeves continued, "This is not Detroit. Finding this wallet in my yard - I don't like it. I really don't like it. I don't believe in community policing. I do believe in feeling safe. I give up on the bench and about the tulips."

Watson - "In most cities in America, narcotics is an issue. With narcotics come weapons and shootings. I hope you can find something good to say about these officers. With undercover work, there are risks involved. If we have to be overcautious to protect an officer's life, I'll take those two extra days."

Reeves - "For most of my time here, I didn't even lock my doors. When my house was broken into, I called the police and they didn't respond. When they came, no fingerprints were taken. Everybody has constraints. I want a product I can celebrate. If I wasn't particularly complimentary, I didn't mean to be complimentary."

Councillor Maher began a discussion about race and gender among people of higher rank in the Police Department. He noted that out of 33 sergeants, slightly over 5% were women.

Watson - "Every member of the department is allowed to participate in the exam. The department brought in an instructor. A lot of these people spend time with police details. It's more important than preparing for promotions. We'd like to see better representation. Even if they don't pass, they're better prepared. But the focus changes to the details. Some don't want the responsibilities of supervising others."

There was a discussion of how hard it is to be promoted to sergeant. The average age of a sergeant is currently 38 and

there are few openings. Councillor Maher noted that there are significantly less sergeant jobs than 10 or 15 years ago. "The quandary is that we're trying to promote women and people of color, but there's no opportunity to open these jobs up."

Watson - "I face this every time there's an exam. It gives a false sense of the possibility of being promoted. Could we create some other levels within the department, like a corporal? We'd have to look at it."

Healy explained that commissioners present and past finally established a table in which there were not all chiefs and not enough Indians. "This creates a level of certainty. There is not a job unless there is a vacancy. There used to be 44 sergeants. The answer is not to make more, to take patrol officers off the street. Back then, we had 11 more sergeants than we ever needed."

Watson explained that half of the current supervisors have been promoted since 1992. "We had more middle chiefs and a lot less Indians. We brought the numbers down to a level that is right for today. It gives better response."

Councillor Decker said that with 33 sergeants and none retiring soon, there would be no openings. She suggested that there was an opportunity this year to promote more women and minorities. "Representation in the upper ranks is pathetic. We must be more active, seize opportunities that are not always there. There's a very real need to promote more women and people of color. Do we have to add another 5, 6, or 7 sergeants in order to get diversity? Is there a way to add more sergeants? If we hire more, then there will be more people to cover."

Watson - "I understand your question, but I don't know what answer you're looking for."

Healy - "This is an age-old problem in civil service exams. There is pressure from those next on the lists to make a few more positions. This only angers others. It's not good policy to do it. There is no recommendation for more superior officers. We've finally found a table that works. It has been upheld by two professional commissioners."

Decker - "Mr. Healy, I respect your experience. My issue is diversity in the upper ranks. The table you have right now is not working."

Healy - "The (purpose of a) table of organization is to reflect the management necessary to run an organization in an effective and efficient fiscal way."

Comm. Watson said that of 48 of higher rank, there are 3 women and 3 people of color.

Decker - "That's the point that I'm making. When we have an opportunity, we seize that opportunity."

Watson - "We'd be going back to what was eliminated in 1992. In the old days, if there were 39 people on the list, they promoted all 39. Today, because of the table of what is needed, we have 33 supervisors (more than enough) and 12 lieutenants (more than enough). The way you achieve diversity is to encourage those on the job to study."

Decker - "If there are only 3 women and 3 people of color, then we are not doing our job. And we wonder why people think

there's a lack of diversity. I'm trying to think out of the box. Seize the opportunity."

Watson - "Of two minorities involved in the process, one of them decided not to and the other one withdrew. We must work within our department. We must stress the importance of them studying, not just promoting them to call it diversity...To get promoted, you have to score on a civil service exam. I fought to have the exam delayed in order to give the opportunity to study."

Decker - "There are no opportunities if there are no vacancies."

Toomey - "I also feel this is an important issue. We should look again at reorganizing that table of organization. 6 out of 48 is unacceptable. If it costs a little bit more, it's well needed to serve the citizens of the city. We can't ever have enough officers on the street. Increase that table of organization."

In response to a question on lieutenants attending community meetings, Watson reminded the Council that he had two persons file grievances because he had them attend community meetings.

Councillor Born said that former Commissioner Perry Anderson told her that a measure of success was the public perception of safety. She said that at last year's meeting at the Margaret Fuller following the drive-by shooting, there was palpable anxiety. There was an expectation that things were going to get better. "You say things are better, but that's not their perception. These people are not prone to wild exaggeration. People looking out the windows don't see that the problem is not there."

Comm. Watson said that while they want to make people feel safe, they have the responsibility to apprehend those responsible for what's going on. "We bring in people from other police departments to do the buys. Our goal is to eliminate the drug dealing. It involves getting to the heart of what goes on in Area 4, including some who live in Area 4. Our strategy is developed in conjunction with the community." He noted that there is some dissension in that community. "We know the summer is coming. We'll start foot patrols again in May. They are getting both uniformed and unseen presence in that area. We made 74 arrests in 1999. Most were related to the drug trade. You have our commitment for more visibility in Area 4."

Public Investment: \$43,054,420

Councillor Born raised the issue of when the public process on surface improvements on North Mass. Ave. would recommence. Though the project involving removal of portions of the median strip and other surface improvements is just the icing on top of an important sewer project, most of the public attention remains on the surface. Rich Rossi said that there was some uncertainty with the MWRA and that funding was on hold. City Engineer Owen O'Riordan said there was a question of whether sewer separation would positively impact Alewife Brook and that the City was waiting on the court parties, the MWRA, and the DEP. He verified that the cost had gone up enormously and that the MWRA was looking into whether sewer separation was the correct approach. Mr. Rossi said that

this pushed back the decision on surface improvements on Mass. Ave. Since this project is tied to the Porter Square reconstruction, that too would be delayed.

Councillor Born asked about a new category in the capital plan for site acquisition and construction related to DPW. Mr. Healy said this was a concept that may or may not be afforded to relocate the Public Works facility from Hampshire St. to the edge of the city. It would be replaced with a combination of affordable housing and open space. He said it would depend on resolution of the Library and Police Station, but that he'd like to keep it in the capital budget in the event of future opportunities.

City Council: \$726,795

This budget includes the salaries of the City Council and staff. It is worth noting that there was no discussion whatsoever on this budget despite the controversies over Council salary increases and proposals to provide personal staff for councillors, a move that would increase this budget significantly. In fact, the Council salary increases that began on July 1 are not included in this budget.

Mayor's Office: \$384,805

The sensitive question of staffing in the Mayor's Office was at the core of this hearing. Chief of Staff Terrence Smith took many of the questions.

Ken Reeves talked about funding for the education liaison who assists the Mayor in his role as Chair of the School Committee, who recently voted to eliminate funding for this position. Reeves noted that this funding did not always come from the School Department. He said the mayor used to have a chauffeur, but Alice Wolf changed this to a "thinking position." Mayors Russell and Duehay had this person appointed from the School Department. "There needs to be an educational liaison (in the Mayor's Office) as much as a receptionist." Referring to a Chronicle article that said there had been a 20% hike in the Mayor's budget, Reeves said, "Where is the institutional memory of this paper? I had to pick up the phone. I suggested to the reporter that they read some back issues of their own paper. A journalism that is devoid of history is hard to read."

Councillor Decker linked staffing in the Mayor's Office with that of the City Council. She stated her belief that there had been four staff positions under Mayor Duehay and that the liaison would be one more. Terry Smith corrected her, saying that under Duehay there had been five staff, four on the City and one on the schools. He said there were now four staff now and one open position pending outcome of these discussions.

Decker asked about the staff position that the Vice-Mayor had under Mayor Duehay. This was somewhat awkward since Mr. Smith served in this position under then-Vice-Mayor Galluccio, a matter of some controversy at the time, especially since it freed up time for Galluccio in his political campaign against State Rep. Alice Wolf.

Councillor Born said that the School Committee voted to eliminate the liaison position because they needed the money in order to make their budget work, to make reorganization of the high school work; and that it would be unusual for the Council to add it back in. She said that the work of Mayor's Office had

grown in the last decade and that some councillors felt that they couldn't handle their own work. She suggested that the matter of staff be sent to the Government Operations Committee and that the Manager could bring in requests for supplemental appropriations for staff for the Mayor's Office and the City Council and "for other City Council issues." [Note: This is the first public reference I know pertaining to the City Council pay raises, albeit a cryptic reference.]

Mayor Galluccio said, "Our staff is now taxed, with some working over 50 hours per week. If the fifth position is not approved, the school liaison position would be cut. Phaedra would go back to clerical. It's \$11,000 to maintain this position. As a new mayor, I'd rather we made cuts than get into cost-splitting or conflict with School Committee. Our salaries were a little high. We made cuts to part-time employment and travel. We made an effort to have the least impact on the City side. I would appreciate the Council's consideration."

There was extended conversation among the councillors and the Manager about how to deal with this conflict with the School Committee over the funding of the school liaison in the Mayor's Office. The general opinion was that this should be funded within the School Dept. budget. Councillor Sullivan noted that the per-pupil cost in the School Department is now \$15,700 and asked how much it would be if this position were added back. Mr. Healy said that it would put it over \$16,000.

Councillor Toomey called the position critical and said the School Department was "very clever" in cutting the position. He suggested that the Council not approve their budget. He reiterated concerns about City Council staffing and suggested separate staff for the Vice-Mayor.

Councillor Born said, "One of the perennial criticisms of the School Department is that it's top-heavy with administration. They need to put the money back into the classroom. It's important that this be in the administration of the School Department. If the School Committee had their own staff, we wouldn't be voting to fund this." [I interpret this as Councillor Born advocating for staff for the School Committee as well.]

Ken Reeves concurred with the opinion that the liaison be funded by the School Department. He added, "I don't believe the vice-mayor needs the extra staffing and not us."

Law Department: \$1,673,980

The major point of discussion was the cost of outside counsel, especially for the School Department - in excess of \$1 million last year. Mr. Healy said that the School Department has historically used outside counsel for collective bargaining negotiations and that this has expanded somewhat. This led to some questions on the Charter relationship between the Council and the School Committee. Mr. Healy said that the School Department is just another department of the City.

Councillor Maher suggested that a closer look at the School Department's use of outside counsel would be in order. "Left to their own, they won't look at this. It was rarely discussed. The outside counsel is like a staff member. It's become an indispensable role. We need to reevaluate this. It adds to the spiraling school budget when we spend significant money on

non-educational purposes. Even to put two dedicated staff to the school department would give significant savings.”

On the Law Department budget in general, Councillor Sullivan said, “We get a lot for \$1.6 million.”

Election Commission: \$588,330

Some discussion centered on how quickly results could be known after an election. Commissioner Rusty Drugan said that in the municipal election we had unofficial first counts for the City Council race around 9:45pm on Election Day. Councillor Born remarked that we take our proportional representation elections for granted, with its pros and cons. She suggested a workshop on PR at the upcoming National League of Cities conference in Boston, noting that “there is tremendous interest elsewhere in the country.”

Comm. Drugan suggested a Roundtable on election-related issues. He said the Commission is considering having an unofficial PR count on Election Day but said this should be discussed with the larger public.

Councillor Born asked about the recent controversy involving ballot questions and active vs. inactive voters. Comm. Drugan said that the Motor-Voter law, which deliberately made it hard to remove names from the voter list, drives the current system. The idea is to have as many people registered as possible. The definition of a registered voter was expanded under this law to include both active and inactive voters, and in a city like Cambridge this leads to a higher percentage of inactive voters than in most communities. A person must not be listed in the annual census or not vote in two consecutive federal elections in order to be removed from the rolls. The commissioners are looking into whether other state statutes need to be revised in light of this law and that the required signatures of 8% of registered voters to put a question on the ballot may need to be lowered. The requirement for a ballot question to pass is that it must get a plurality vote in an election in which no fewer than one-third of all registered voters will have participated, a near impossibility. The current law was fully implemented in 1996, and now that two federal elections have taken place, it should be easier to prune the voter list.

Historical Commission: \$288,510

The most interesting part of this discussion was when Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Commission, spoke of the revisions and new printings of the five-volume “Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge.” Only the Cambridgeport book is still in print. A new edition of the Old Cambridge book will be going to press soon. The North Cambridge and East Cambridge books could be reprinted as is, but the book on Mid-Cambridge will need to be redone from scratch. It costs \$20,000 each to reprint to have enough copies in stock, but the books will stay in print for many years. Based on past sales, a typical run of 2-3,000 books will take 8-12 years to sell out.

Councillor Davis suggested selling them as boxed sets. Mr. Sullivan responded that the “Ten Walking Tours” boxed set sold about 12,000 copies before the MIT Press pulled it. He said the Historical Commission would love to do some reprints.

Councillor Born asked about continued funding for the oral history projects. Mr. Healy said he’d “ruminate about this and make recommendations prior to final approval of budget.” [He came through with additional funding on the night the budget was passed.]

Assessing: \$1,239,170

There was discussion of the possibility of the assessors using income rather than market value for properties where owners maintain lower rents for long-term tenants. Sally Powers said the City was mandated to use market values and market rents in order to meet certification requirements. There is an exception if there is a lien on the property or a restriction for affordable housing. The citywide average assessed value is \$65-70,000 per one-bedroom or small two-bedroom unit.

Traffic, Parking, Transportation: \$6,677,540

In response to questions from Councillor Davis, it was noted that the number of resident parking permits was about 34,000 in 1994, dropped to a low of about 31,000 in 1996 and has now risen to about 38,000 permits. There are about 20,000 on-street resident permit spaces in the city.

Human Services: \$11,541,135

Discussion centered around the Community Schools program, Head Start program, Extended Day program, the Multi-Service Center, senior programs, the possibility of City shuttles, and the housing assistance fund. Councillor Born spoke of tension at the Kids’ Council over resources being directed to the Extended Day program at the expense of youth centers and other programs. She said that these should not be competing.

Public comment followed with three residents, Carolyn Shipley (Chair of the Citywide Community Council), Rachel Dorr, and Jose Braga speaking in support of the Community Schools Program. Ms. Shipley said there was a petition asking for increased salaries for community school program directors that had over 1000 signatures.

Agenda for Children:

This item was covered in both the May 3 and May 9 Budget hearings. Mr. Healy called it “an unprecedented collaboration among City agencies and City departments.” It has also had its share of conflict between those associated with the Kids’ Council and those associated with the Agenda for Children. The conflict remains a mystery to this writer.

School Superintendent Bobbie D’Alessandro said there were only two goals of the Agenda for Children: Every child should be able to read, and every child should have access to a safe and nurturing environment. She said the action plans were done and they were ready to begin. She said they’d already received one national award and were poised for future grants.

Councillor Decker asked why there was a separate line item in Human Services to fund this rather than in the budget for the Kids’ Council. Jill Herold said the Kids’ Council is a cost center within the Human Services budget as is the Agenda for Children and the Harrington Extended Day Program. Decker said she believed the Agenda for Children to be a partnership between the Mayor’s Office and the Human Services Dept. as she quoted some history of it being founded during Alice Wolf’s

tenure as mayor. To this Ms. Herold responded that she understood the Kids' Council to be a policy oversight committee. She said that policy discussions take place there and that members take these policies back to their departments and organizations for implementation.

When discussion resumed on May 9, Councillor Decker again hammered away at the relationship between the Agenda for Children and the Kids' Council. There was an unusually long amount of time spent on this seemingly inconsequential matter, so I concluded that it came down entirely to a matter of turf. I also got the impression that State Rep. Alice Wolf still retained an interest in the matter. Decker referred to "the mission of the Kids' Council and its Executive Director" in a way that had turf written all over it.

After remarks by Bobbie D'Allessandro, Mr. Healy explained that the Kids' Council has an advisory role under the ordinance. He said, "Why create more bureaucracy rather than use existing resources. We agreed that there should be two positions, one to lead each of the two goals. The budget had cost centers for the Agenda for Children and for the Kids' Council. We included the additional funding in the Agenda for Children cost center. There is nothing harmful in approving the budget document. The matter can still be discussed, but final administrative structure is the responsibility of the City Manager."

To this, Councillor Reeves responded, "Is the deal done? People at home probably don't know what we're talking about." He then loosely explained, but this left me just as mystified about the conflict.

School Department: \$106,021,465

This hearing opened with public comment by Bill Jones, Emma Stickgold, and Gerald Bergman, who reiterated his earlier comments regarding the Maynard/Fletcher merger. He said that this fall over 300 kids would be moving into the Maynard School and the new school would have to increase by at least 10,000 square feet. He said the State would not be funding the project and that the City should take the unprecedented step of funding through bonds the \$12.7 million necessary for major renovations at the school.

The City Manager told of meetings with councillors, School Committee members, and City staff about the feasibility study for renovation of the Maynard/Fletcher School. He announced a commitment of an additional \$1.1 million in the Capital Budget to allow for renovation and equipment. He said that a new look is being given to school building renovation at the state level. There are 126 projects on the waiting list, so nothing would happen until at least 2003.

School Committee member Joe Grassi spoke about the high school redesign, the Fletcher/Maynard merger, the 1500 empty seats, and the achievement gap. He expressed the desire of the School Committee to revamp their budget process. Denise Simmons also talked about restructuring at CRLS and of the Maynard/Fletcher merger, and spoke of trying to revamp the hiring process to get more people of color.

Councillor Reeves characterized the Maynard/Fletcher merger as "joining the two poorest schools and the two most-

minority schools in the two worst buildings." On the school system, he said, "Keep the schools that are working and get rid of those that don't work. We have to solve the Cambridgeport issue and the Maynard/Fletcher issue. This declining enrollment story is something we have to address."

Ms. Simmons said that now that the Fletcher School would be empty, this could provide a home for the Cambridgeport School or for School Department Headquarters. On the matter of empty seats, she explained that the policy is that when enrollment at a school falls below some point, they must "talk to the School Department around the issue." [Note: We do an awful lot of "talking around" issues in Cambridge. I can only hope that one day we'll start talking directly to issues and acting accordingly.]

On the Fletcher/Maynard matter, Ms. Simmons said, "That's my community. I don't want to have children wait until 2003 whether it's on the Maynard site or in Central Square where the library shoulda woulda coulda been."

Councillor Sullivan said that after consultation with the Budget co-chairs of the School Committee, there was consensus about the issue of using outside legal counsel. They agree to limit of six months and \$133,484.50. The budget would not change, but the procedures would.

There was some discussion on the costs of sending students to Minuteman Tech now that the Rindge School of Technical Arts no longer exists. [These costs have mushroomed since and, to my knowledge, there is no resolution.] The councillors also discussed declining enrollments and changing demographics of the city. Lots of discussion, but no answers.

Joe Grassi took the opportunity to repeat his misreading of the Green Ribbon Open Space Report as he claimed "There is no recommendation for multiple playing fields in one location in the Green Ribbon Report." Wrong again.

Councillors Born and Davis emphasized the need for a comprehensive facilities management plan for the School Department, especially in light of declining enrollments and school mergers.

Councillor Braude suggested that the School Department do a better job of marketing itself to parents. "What the government does worse is sell what it does best. It's not just the School Department. The City spends almost no dollars on marketing." He noted recent awards received within the school system and added, "I'm getting bludgeoned on Fletcher/Maynard. My kids go to school in the dump of dumps, the Cambridgeport School. It is physically and grotesquely inadequate -- and I wouldn't send my kids anywhere else." He added that Cambridgeport School parents were owed clarity and a definitive statement on where they will be in the next few years.

On the high school redesign, Mayor Galluccio said, "This demonstrates tremendous courage. It had to happen. In progressive areas, we do more talking than action. It's better to fail on the merits than to lack of leadership."