

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

November 3, 1986

To the Honorable, the City Council

As the City Council is aware, a lack of sufficient space which has lead to operational problems exists at all current City Administrative buildings. Over the last several years my office has received complaints from individual City Councilors regarding space problems in various City departments and agencies, including the lack of adequate space for the City Council. Additionally, this office and many City agencies receive complaints from citizens and people conducting business within the City about inadequate facilities in which to conduct public business.

The City currently houses most administrative departments in three buildings, City Hall, City Hall Annex (57 Inman Street) and the Coffin Building (51 Inman Street). 51 and 57 Inman Street were not originally designed as office space. Although they have since been renovated, the addition of several agencies over the years has made both of these buildings severely overcrowded. During the past ten years, the Traffic and Parking function has greatly expanded and the Arts Council, Fuel Assistance Program, Women's Commission, Peace Commission, Human Rights Commission, Consumer Commission, Handiapped Commission, Animal Commission, and soon the Civilian Review Board will have been moved into these two buildings. In addition to space problems, both buildings will require costly major overhauls to the existing mechanical systems. At City Hall the problems are similar. The reorganization of the Inspectional Services Department, which brought health and sanitation inspectors into City Hall, created severe space problems in that agency that have resulted in part of the open hallway being used to conduct public business, an embarrassing and unprofessional manner in which to operate. The License Commission staff, which the Council voted to expand to improve enforcement of regulations, can no longer exist in space meant for fewer people. The Assessing Department, now located on two floors, has grown by nine permanent employees in recent years as the City has responded

to full market valuation mandated by state law. Computer operations, which did not exist five years ago, now occupy office space on the third floor. Finally, as noted above, City Councilors have complained in recent years about the lack of office space for the Councilors to meet with constituents and to conduct research.

In addition to the problems at City Hall, City Hall Annex and 51 Inman Street, the City currently leases office space for the Rent Control Department and School Department and houses the Election Commission in the Police Station. The School Department facilities are leased at a cost of \$45,000 annually and require an additional \$27,000 per year for heat and light. The Rent Control office space is leased at an annual cost of \$87,000.

The results of the decentralization of City administrative facilities have been mostly negative:

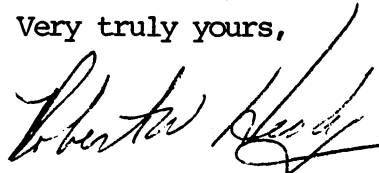
- * Citizens and business people who wish to transact business with various departments must often go to more than one building, none of which contain parking reserved solely for the public. A citizen wishing to pay a parking ticket, tax bill, register to vote, sign up for a Human Service Program, and check with the Rent Control Department would have to visit five different buildings. Additionally, much staff time is lost because of the different physical locations of various City departments.
- * Decentralized operations are expensive and inefficient. It costs over \$400,000 annually to maintain and operate the Annex, 51 Inman Street, Rent Control and the School Department facilities. Costs that will continue to escalate.
- * Employee credibility and public confidence in our employees are reduced by the unprofessional image the City puts forth in our existing physical environment. What must architects and engineers think as they kneel on the floor to review plans.

The City Council recognized the existing space problems when it recently passed an order requesting that the City Manager explore the possibility of purchasing the Department of Transportation Building in Kendall Square. The Mayor and I travelled to Washington to meet with Speaker O'Neill and others to determine the availability of that building. For various reasons it is not now an option and probably will never be one. A second alternative examined was to explore the possibility of squeezing additional office space out of existing buildings through the renovation process. While an architectural firm retained by the City stated that they might better organize existing operations, the bottom line was that the City desperately needed more space. A third alternative investigated was the possible purchase of a 20,000 square foot commercial building abutting City Hall. If the City were to purchase this building it would solve some but not all of the immediate space problems. However, in addition to not solving the School Department's problem, this solution would add yet another administrative building to the City's roster.

In the search for additional space, staff became aware of a 100,000 square foot office building that is ninety percent vacant, in close proximity to City Hall and is for sale. Because the owners of this building are caught in a soft office rental market it may be possible for the City to obtain this building at a reasonable cost. Preliminary analysis indicates that the purchase of this building would result in several financial and operational improvements for the City. The purchase would allow us to reduce from five to two the number of administrative buildings (City Hall and the new one), provide adequate meeting and working conditions for employees and the public, provide parking for visitors to the building and operate at a lower cost (net of debt service) than the existing buildings do.

The purpose of this memo is to inform the City Council of the current status of our space search. A detailed analysis of the options is currently being prepared and my recommendations to the City Council will follow shortly. Under normal circumstances it is my preference and that of the City Council that adequate calendar time be granted for discussion of City Council issues. However, given the rapid changes that can occur in the real estate market, and financial advantages that can be gained by closing a transaction before tax laws change on December 31, it may be necessary for the City Council to move rapidly, either affirmatively or negatively once I have made a recommendation.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", written in a cursive style.

Robert W. Healy,
City Manager

RWH/dls

Agenda Item No. 12 S-6/2

Re: space problems in City Administrative
buildings.

In City Council,

November 3, 1986

Placed on F-ile