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Cambridge, MA 02139

28 April 1994

The Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

To the Honorable the City Council:

Last Monday night, April 25th, the Cambridge City Council voted not to adopt a resolution calling on William H. Walsh to resign as a City Councilor in response to Mr. Walsh's conviction on 41 counts of bank fraud, making false statements and conspiracy. Not one of the four Councilors voting to reject this resolution --Councilors Russell, Sullivan and Toomey and Mayor Reeves-- said a single word on the issue or in defense of their willingness to continue to welcome Mr. Walsh as their peer on the Cambridge City Council.

I understand that a motion to reconsider last Monday's vote has been filed and will come up for discussion on Monday, May 2nd. I hope that Councilors Russell, Sullivan and Toomey and Mayor Reeves will use this as an occasion to explain simply and clearly --to themselves, their colleagues on the Council and to the people of Cambridge-- why they do not believe a convicted criminal ought to be called on to resign from the public trust he shares with them.

Speaking in favor of this resolution last Monday night, I expressed my relief that the Council was, at long last, taking up its responsibility to address this issue. I also expressed my hope that all eight Councilors would speak to this matter. This hope was frustrated by the failure to speak of the four Councilors voting to reject the resolution. In my remarks to the Council, I tried to point out that the resolution did not force or command Mr. Walsh to do anything, nor did it restrict his rights in any way. Rather it simply asked him to resign in accord with ordinary standards of honor and integrity.

I also said that Mr. Walsh's conviction for bank fraud --the mishandling of other people's money, ultimately at the expense of the public at large-- renders him unfit to participate in decisions about the city budget and other financial matters affecting the people of Cambridge. I said as well that Mr. Walsh's conviction for making false statements meant that a jury of his peers had found him to be a liar of criminal proportions and that he is, therefore, unfit to serve as the Chair of the Council's Ordinance Committee and to go on participating in the creation of the laws of Cambridge. For all these reasons it seems to me, as I said last Monday night, that Mr. Walsh's continued presence on the Council would go on tainting the Council's integrity and hindering its ability to do its work in accord with the public trust.

Clearly, the four Councilors who have declined to call on Mr. Walsh to resign do not agree with my assessment of this matter or with the other and similar remarks made by their colleagues on the Council who voted to request Mr. Walsh to resign. What they do think about this matter remains a mystery

because they have not yet bothered to rouse themselves to say anything about it.

I can hardly imagine that Councilors Russell, Sullivan and Toomey and Mayor Reeves concur with the things said last Monday night by Mr. Walsh or those who spoke to support him, three of them people associated with the small property owners group and the fourth being Robert LaTremouille. I also do not believe these four Councilors agree with Mr. Walsh and his supporters: 1) that Mr. Walsh is an innocent; 2) that he is merely an accused and not a convict; 3) that his crimes are small and insignificant; 4) that the private pain he has caused his mother, his family and his friends outweighs the public damage he has done to the people of Cambridge; 5) that to request a convicted fraud to resign from a public body is a political attack; 6) that to call on Mr. Walsh to resign infringes on his rights or harms the rights of members of the small property owners group who claim to have elected him and claim that he belongs to them as they belong to him; 7) that Mr. Walsh is a figure comparable to Jesus Christ. But until Councilors Russell, Sullivan and Toomey and Mayor Reeves speak, the people of Cambridge have no way of knowing what these four Councilors do think about this matter or why they acted as they did last Monday night.

The best evidence we have so far of the corrupting influence Mr. Walsh's continuing presence will have on Cambridge and the City Council were the slashing and wildly accusatory attacks he and some of his supporters made last Monday night in total disregard of any ordinary standard of honesty. I do not believe the four Councilors from whom we have heard precisely nothing want to risk the appearance that they favor this kind of behavior or think it is trivial. But, again, until we hear from them, we can't know what they do think.

I know I can easily and unfairly be stereotyped as a "political activist," "a tenant leader," "an advocate of rent control" and so forth. But just like anyone else in this town, the circle of my responsibilities, associations, friendships and acquaintances both in the city and beyond reaches much further than any such foolish labels. I am convinced that most of the citizens of Cambridge feel as disappointed in and betrayed by the silence of Councilors Russell, Sullivan and Toomey and Mayor Reeves as I do, regardless of where they are positioned politically. The failure of these Councilors to speak is a failure of public responsibility and leadership and a failure of concern for the people they represent.

As long as these four Councilors maintain their silence on this matter of the convicted felon in their midst, they risk being drawn into delivering another kind of blow to the integrity of the city and its Council, or into appearing to support Mr. Walsh in his kind of lack of integrity, or even into the orbit of his moral collapse.

I request that this communication be referred to the discussion on reconsideration.

Respectfully,

Geoffrey Gardner

