

47.

September 9, 1997

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
FROM JANET M. KING, 7 BOWDOIN STREET, CAMBRIDGE
RE Improper and rude handling of my calls today
to the Cambridge 911 number

Today I called twice to Cambridge's 911 number to report a serious and urgent situation. My calls were treated as if they came from a crank. I was repeatedly interrupted. When I could not provide an exact address the first person who answered cut me off and hung up. The second person, whose conversation with me was recorded, also kept cutting me off and appeared to take my information lightly.

BACKGROUND

Today at 10:55 am I was returning along Mass. Avenue from the Porter Square Post Office. At the triangular intersection where Mass. Ave. meets what I think is Somerville Avenue, a crane was working. This area has been under construction for weeks. The crane was working at the Mass. Ave. side corner of the Star Market parking lot.

As I approached the corner where there is a pedestrian crosswalk to the MBTA station, I started to slip. The entire sidewalk smelled of oil. I righted myself and attempted to cross the street. The entire street paving was also coated with oil. As I reached safety at the entrance to the MBTA station, I looked back and saw one person fall as she crossed the street, right in the path of oncoming cars.

An elderly couple was trying to negotiate the same oil-covered sidewalk which had just nearly caused me to take a fall.

I was afraid to go back, although I saw a police officer in uniform standing near the Dunkin' Doughnuts that fronts the parking lot. Instead, I went into the old Sears building and called 911.

The first person to answer my call, a woman, became impatient when I could not provide the number of a building where the oil was spilled. I continually repeated "Porter Square. Send a car and you'll see a crane. The oil is spilled right underneath."

Within a minute this woman hung up on me.

I dialed again. This time a message came on saying my call was being recorded. This gave me hope I would be treated seriously.

But as I again attempted to explain the danger from the oil spill, the person answering, this time a man, kept interrupting. He wanted to know whether I needed an ambulance. When I said "No," he told me I should be calling another number. He said 911 was for life-threatening emergencies only.

WHAT IS MORE LIFE THREATENING THAN AN OIL SLICK WHICH HAS JUST CAUSED A PEDESTRIAN TO FALL IN THE PATH OF ONCOMING TRAFFIC?

I retorted that the situation I was reporting was life-threatening. The officer again told me to call another number.

REQUEST FOR ACTION

I would like answers from the City Council and from the Cambridge Police Chief about the way my call was treated. As a Cambridge resident and taxpayer for 37 years, I am upset and disgusted by the way my sincere efforts to do my duty as a citizen and to report a dangerous situation were handled lightly, even contemptuously by the Police Department

Please respond and tell me what you are going to do to insure that calls to 911 are given respectful attention.

I am a resident and taxpayer
since 1960!

~~Suitable resolution on the death
of Charles Moore~~

Refer a letter on a 911
response for a response from
the CM

ms

w/r



City of Cambridge

47.

IN CITY COUNCIL
September 15, 1997

COUNCILLOR DAVIS
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN

ORDERED: That the attached letter be and hereby is referred to the City Manager from Janet M. King, 7 Bowdoin Street, regarding the improper and rude handling of her calls to the Cambridge 911 number.

In City Council September 15, 1997.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

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D. Margaret Drury

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D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

CM-584

Consent Order #47

Councillors Davis and Sullivan re: Letter
from Janet M. King regarding the improper
and rude handling of her calls to the
Cambridge 911 number.

Handwritten signature

In City Council September 15, 1997

ORDER ADOPTED