



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #4

IN CITY COUNCIL

January 10, 2000

COUNCILLOR BORN

ORDERED: That notice of littering of cigarette butts is illegal, be included with all City mailings such as recycling.

In City Council January 10, 2000.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D. Margaret Drury".

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

Mr. Lamb stated that he would volunteer his services to put the proposal together.

Councillor Born stated that it is illegal to litter in the City. However, enforcement is difficult twenty-four hours a day. She stated that there is a difference in littering a cigarette butt and a food wrapper.

Mr. Lamb passed out pocket ashtrays to the Committee. He stated that the ashtrays are inexpensive and can be carried around in pockets. He informed the Committee that his proposal is not meant to inconvenience anyone.

Mr. Lamb stated that littering is so frequently violated. If warnings were issued, awareness is learned and rules are obeyed. He informed the Committee he could fine at least one hundred people a day.

Mr. John Bolduc, Environmental Planner, Community Development Department, asked Mr. Lamb if he knew of any other Municipal Programs on cigarette littering. Mr. Lamb stated that there are so many issues that this issue takes a back seat. He stated that many companies make innovative products, such as the pocket ashtray, but the public is not aware of these products.

The Committee heard from Julia Bowdoin, Executive Director, Conservation Commission, who stated that cigarette smokers may be afraid to put a cigarette butt in a garbage can because of the possibility of it not being extinguished and this is why cigarettes are put on the ground. Mr. Lamb informed the Committee that the Fire Department does not have an official policy on this subject.

Councillor Born stated that litter campaigns involve enforcement; litter laws are already in effect. Education efforts are grant funded rather than City funded, she said. Mr. Lamb stated that this law is selectively enforced. Law enforcement agents do not know that this law should be enforced, he said. He suggested that warnings be issued to help with education and enforcement. Information on this issue should be mailed out with City mailings sent by the Department of Public Works, such as recycling mailings. Councillor Born also suggested efforts to educate all City employees.

Mr. Lamb again offered his service to volunteer to draft a formal plan. Councillor Born suggested putting together a broad group of constituents such as the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association, neighborhood groups, Area 4 Coalition, Central Square Business Association and the Harvard Square Business Association.

At the conclusion of the meeting Councillor Born made the following motion:

ORDERED: **That notice of littering of cigarette butts is illegal be included with all City mailings such as recycling.**

The motion –

Carried.

The meeting adjourned at six o'clock.

For the Committee,

Kathleen L. Born

Councillor Kathleen L. Born,
Chair

myda

121699.EnvironmentCommittee.CigaretteLittering

Cigarette Litter Brainstorming Ideas

I. Defining the problem

The problem is, quite simply, the hundreds of thousands of cigarettes lining our cities sidewalks, garden areas, parks and other public places. This litter results from a combination of the unique inconvenience of disposing of cigarettes along with a widespread lack of awareness that cigarettes are no less items of litter than candy wrappers or soda cans.

II. Isolating cigarette litter issue from general tobacco debate

While many of us feel that cigarettes in and of themselves are a social ill, and while we may contribute to efforts to curb smoking or implement clean indoor air laws, we should separate any efforts to curb smoking from efforts to reduce cigarette litter. There are several reasons for this. One is that many die-hard smokers are equally as disturbed by cigarette litter as non-smokers and can assist in this effort. The same can be said of cigarette retailers who might contribute to the cause in return for the PR. Also, it is very hard for anyone to argue against the ills of littering, so this effort could remain relatively uncontroversial and therefore easier to manage. The fight against cigarette litter should not be in place of, but in addition to, other efforts aimed at tobacco abuse.

III. Public awareness is key

Most people are reluctant to think of themselves as doing wrong and most people agree that litter is wrong. Unfortunately, people are good at rationalizing their actions, especially if left unchecked. Littering of cigarettes is so commonplace today among people of all walks of life, that most smokers have convinced themselves that the ground is the appropriate final resting place for their cigarettes. What is worse, however, is that there is virtually no message at any level that this is wrong. I believe that the city should officially condemn the act of cigarette littering and firmly remind smokers that this is illegal and harmful to the community.

IV. Law enforcement measures are unfortunate but necessary

No one likes to get a ticket, whether it is for parking, speeding, or anything else. We as a society understand, however, that tickets and fines are sometimes the only way to enforce laws that have been enacted for the good of the entire community. This particular law may seem difficult to enforce, but it is in fact quite simple to enforce due to the unfortunate fact that it is so frequently violated. I have found that the majority of smokers one passes on the sidewalk will discard their cigarettes on the ground. The same is true of smokers outside office buildings during breaks, at bus stops and even at park benches, especially when there is not an ashtray immediately available. With minimal effort, a single law enforcement agent, or even a traffic officer, could find ten violations a day.

V. Community involvement

Getting local businesses, especially cigarette retailers, to support anti-litter efforts, is critical. It will also be important to solicit the support of neighborhood associations. Youth groups can be partnered with to help spread the word, as protecting the environment becomes more meaningful when considering future generations. Other volunteers could be utilized to help spread the word, or even to issue fines to offenders if that is legally permissible.

VI. Clean up efforts or increasing the availability of ashtrays is the wrong solution

Clean up efforts are very short lived and only encourage continued littering. In fact, many smokers already justify their littering by claiming that street cleaning will remove their litter or that someone "was going to sweep up anyway". Obviously, these claims are wrong, as the evidence on our streets will attest. Increasing ashtrays also serves to publicly condone smoking and reinforces the idea that disposal of one's trash is the sole responsibility of the city. Smokers are constantly discarding their cigarettes within feet of existing ashtrays. More importantly, there are many places, such as public forests, where ashtrays are simply inappropriate eyesores. It is imperative that smokers understand that littering cigarettes is never acceptable. It should be their job to lobby for ashtrays as a convenience for them once the litter laws are being complied with.

VII. Focus on the benefits of eliminating cigarette litter for all involved

Again, very few people will argue that litter is a good thing. Most people realize that cleaner streets and parks mean a more beautiful, enjoyable, friendly community. Cleaning the streets will have a positive impact on property prices, tourism, and local business.

VIII. Youth impact

Unfortunately, smoking and cigarette littering are both habits that begin at an early age and are two of the ways our youth learn to disrespect the laws and the community. I believe that curbing youth smoking will have a positive impact on the cigarette litter problem, not to mention the other gains. Publicizing the environmental impact of smoking is also a more efficient way of reaching kids than simply discussing the health issues. If kids accept that it is unacceptable to litter their cigarettes, smoking will become an even more inconvenient habit, which will provide one more incentive not to smoke.

IX. First steps

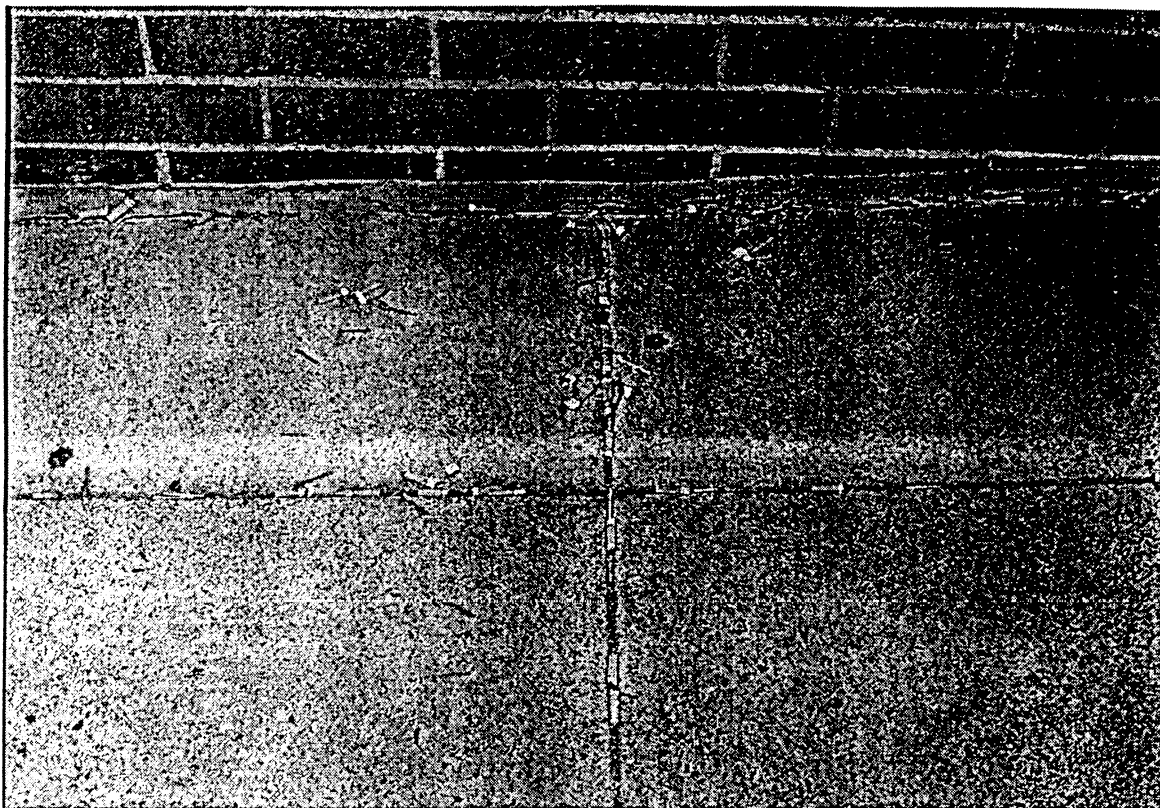
The most important first step the city can take is to pass a resolution affirming that littering cigarettes is illegal and harmful to the community and ensuring that the resolution is reported on by local media. Additional steps would be to issue memos to

the appropriate departments (police, public works, fire department) stating the resolution and providing guidance for support of the resolution. I would like the city to come up with reasonably inexpensive plan for notifying residents of the resolution and requesting compliance. If the city were to sponsor a task force on the issue, I would certainly volunteer to lead such a task force and attempt to solicit community involvement. Clearly, funding of such an effort is extremely important, but the lack of funds should not prevent the effort from being launched.

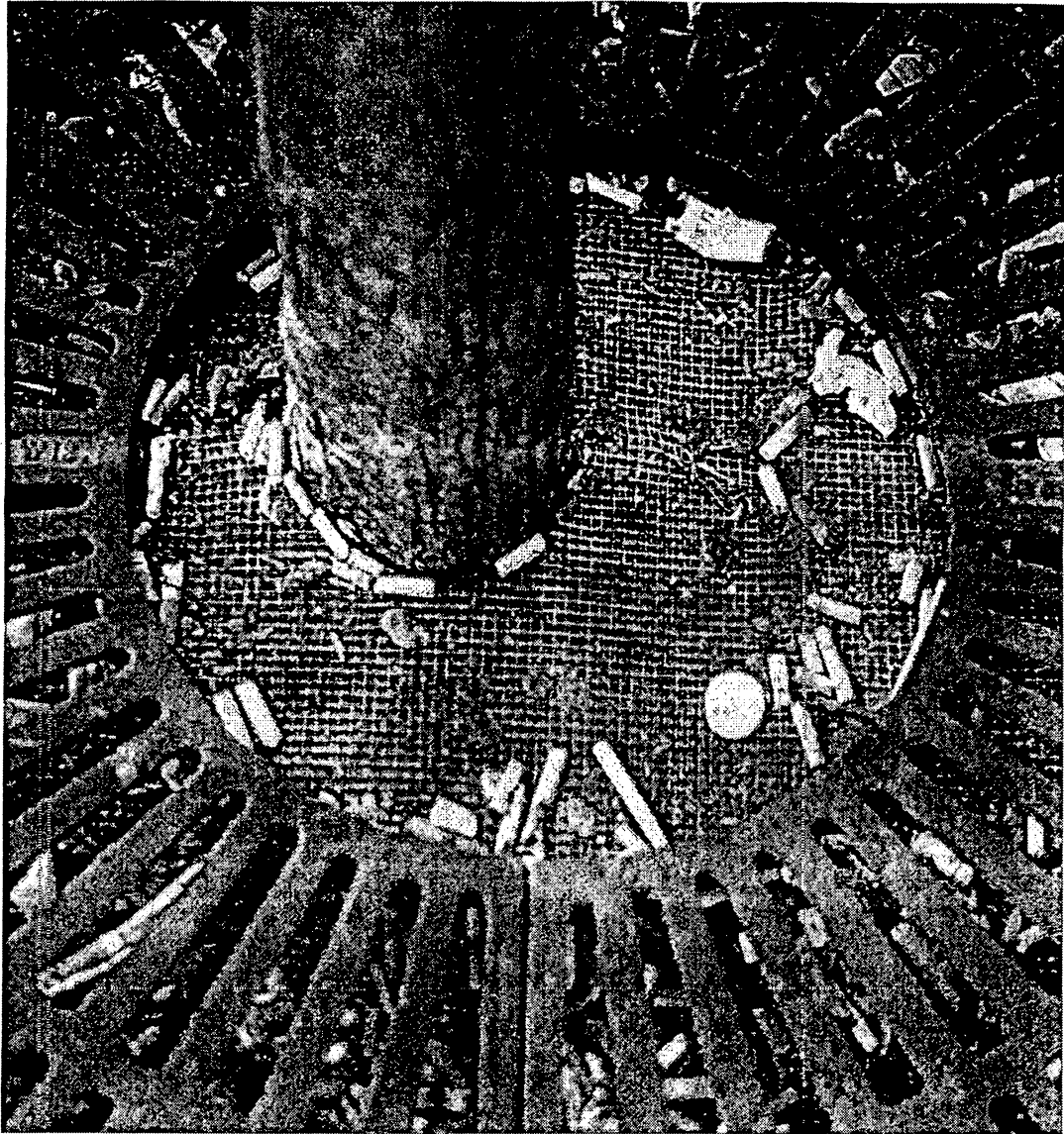
X. Legal issues

While I would view lawsuits as a last result, the city's lawyers may wish to investigate potential legal action against the tobacco companies and/or cigarette retailers. They are manufacturing a product which is difficult to dispose of and as such, they are profiting and leaving communities with the costs of cleanup and the burden of littered streets. They could potentially be forced to help in this effort if they are not voluntarily cooperative.

Rough Draft



Rough D



A planted tree in Central Square in Cambridge is littered with cigarettes.
As far as the smokers in this area know, the place to discard your cigarette is at your feet.

THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Councillor Kathleen Born, Chair
Councillor Henrietta Davis
Councillor Sheila Russell

City of Cambridge

In City Council January 10, 2000

The Environment Committee conducted a public meeting on Thursday, December 16, 1999 at five o'clock and twenty-five minutes p. m. in the Sullivan Chamber, City Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a proposal to alleviate cigarette littering in the City.

Present at the meeting were: Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Chair of the Committee; John Bolduc, Environmental Planner, Community Development Department, Julia Bowdoin, Executive Director, Conservation Commission and Donna P. Lopez, Deputy City Clerk.

Councillor Born opened the meeting by stating that Walter Lamb submitted an initiative on cigarette littering to the City Council. This proposal, she stated was referred to the Environment Committee and was the subject of this meeting which is attached. **(ATTACHMENT A)**

The Committee heard from Walter Lamb, 57 Ellery Street # 4, who stated that cigarette litter is a much larger problem than general litter, such as candy wrappers. There is more detriment from cigarette litter than other litter such as fire hazards. Cigarette litter is starting to be addressed nationally, he said.

Mr. Lamb stated that his proposal requires action, such as:

1. create awareness
there is no distinction between throwing cigarette litter on the ground as opposed to regular litter
2. develop a proposal
he would like help from the City Council to develop a proposal
3. suggested a news event to publicize the proposal
media coverage should be secured
4. develop a fair proposal
the proposal should be unifying
public awareness should be stressed
enforcement of proposal
community involvement

A communication was received from Donna Lopez, Deputy City Clerk, transmitting a report from Councillor Born, Chair of the Environment Committee for a hearing held on December 16, 1999, for the purpose of discussing a proposal to alleviate cigarette littering in the City.

5-6

In City Council January 10, 2000

Report Accepted
Order Adopted
Placed on file