

MCNA NEWS

A Publication of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association
November 1986

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING NOVEMBER 13

The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association will sponsor a Neighborhood Meeting at the Longfellow School cafeteria, Broadway and Fayette Street, on November 13 at 7:00 PM. Our featured guest will be City Manager Robert Healy. Mr. Healy has been invited to respond to concern about the uncompleted rebricking of the Harvard Street sidewalk and the related concern that major public-works projects in our neighborhood should be planned and carried out in consultation with the neighborhood.

Mr. Healy will also discuss the issue of the Broadway/Lee Street/Fayette Street traffic light, ordered by the City Council last April, but still not installed.

The meeting's other focus will be on the effectiveness of zoning and conservation controls on residential development in the neighborhood. A slide show of recent construction will be presented by Lisa Betteridge, artist/photographer and treasurer of MCNA. Hugh Russell, architect and long-time neighborhood activist, will discuss the neighborhood's remaining developable spaces. These spaces include many backyards.

More detailed articles on the sidewalk, traffic light, and residential development issues appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

All neighborhood residents are invited and encouraged to attend this meeting.

HARVARD STREET BLUES (SAND IN SHOES)

The sidewalk on the odd side of Harvard Street remains a sandy rut. The City of Cambridge began rebricking the street's sidewalks in the fall of 1985, but the work came to a halt in July of this year when the city's contractor, Baker & Co. of Stoughton, went bankrupt.

The city hires contractors on the basis of the lowest bid. To protect itself, the city requires the contractor to be bonded. In this case, the city has a 100 percent performance bond covering Baker & Co., meaning that the bonding company (Aetna) must hire another contractor to finish the work as originally planned, without additional cost to the city.

When the work will be completed is another question, however. The city put Baker and the bonding company on notice before July 1, but could not begin legal action until July 31, when the original contract deadline passed. Aetna is now in the process of seeking new contractor bids. Once chosen, the new contractor will meet with the Department of Public Works to work out a schedule.

Baker & Co. left several other Cambridge projects uncompleted or unbegun when it entered Chapter 11 bankruptcy, including ones on Rindge Avenue, Huron Avenue, Pearl Street, Commercial Street, and the Lechmere Bridge. In addition, Harvard Street was to be resurfaced.

Given the intricacies of hiring a new contractor and the multiplicity of projects to be done, combined with the maximum of six to eight remaining weeks of working weather, the pedestrians of Harvard Street may face another winter of unfinished sidewalks and sand in their shoes.

This issue will be one of the subjects of discussion with City Manager Healy at the November 13 meeting.

BROADWAY TRAFFIC LIGHT

A Cambridge City Council order of April 28, 1986, instructed the City Manager to have Commissioner of Traffic George Teso arrange for the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Broadway, Fayette Street, and Lee Street, at the Longfellow School. The MCNA has endorsed improved traffic controls on Broadway.

As this newsletter goes to press, six months after the Council's order, no work has begun on putting these lights in place. An MCNA representative was informed by Commissioner Teso that "The City of Cambridge does not pay for traffic lights." The Traffic Department has applied to the state Department of Public Works for funds to install the light, but the request has not yet been approved.

IS RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT REALLY UNDER CONTROL IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

It is now over a year since the Mid-Cambridge Conservation District ordinance was enacted to help preserve the character of Mid-Cambridge. Housing prices and development pressures have escalated considerably in the meantime. The second part of the Neighborhood Meeting on November 13 will focus on the question of whether the Conservation District ordinance and other regulations provide adequate protection against excessive or inappropriate residential development in Mid-Cambridge.

This discussion will start with a presentation by Lisa Betteridge, describing the townhouses that have been completed in the last two years. These developments were all started before the Conservation ordinance came into effect. Almost every Mid-Cambridge resident lives within two blocks of one or more new developments.

These projects were shaped by the zoning ordinance, which continues to be a major influence on the shape of new construction. Even though Mid-Cambridge is the most densely populated neighborhood in the city, there are literally dozens of lots where "infill" development would be permitted by the zoning code. Hugh Russell will enumerate these potential construction sites.

The presentations will conclude with a representative of the Conservation District Commission, who will be asked to assess what kinds of problems seen in past development could be prevented by the Commission. Please bring your own questions.

In future meetings, the Association will look at the need for stricter controls on commercial development, especially in the Massachusetts Avenue corridor from Central to Harvard Squares, and the effects on Mid-Cambridge of the building boom in Outer Cambridge, from Lechmere and Kendall Square to Alewife Brook.

FIRST CONSERVATION DISTRICT PUBLICATION TO APPEAR

The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission has been preparing a book on home rehabilitation and maintenance, with a focus on educating homeowners about proper rehab methods for older homes. The amply illustrated book will be published soon.

ANNUAL NEIGHBORHOOD PARTY - COME ONE AND ALL!!

Put December 5 on your calendar for MCNA's annual party! It's always a fun event for both adults and kids and a chance to see old neighborhood friends and meet new neighbors.

This year's party will be at the beautiful Carpenter Gothic home of Peter and Amy Kinder, 7 Dana Street, beginning at 7:30 PM. Please help to make it a success by being there!

We need volunteers to help with the bar and with organizing refreshments. If you can help, call Joan Lorentz at 547-8936.

MEET THE MCNA COORDINATING COMMITTEE

•PAUL ANDREW is a member of the Mid-Cambridge Conservation District Commission. A video producer, he is active in the International Interactive Communication Society and the Boston Film Video Foundation. He is also a member of the Mid-Cambridge Community Garden in Exile.

•LISA BETTERIDGE, Treasurer of MCNA, is a science teacher. She is District Chairman of the Education and Research Foundation of the AMA Auxiliary and a member of the Boston Camera Club. Lisa also serves on the Historic Gardens Committee of the Cambridge Historical Society.

•ALAN CLARK is active in the Cambridge Civic Association, the Democratic City Committee, and the Harvard Square Churches Meal Program. He edits this newsletter, and his neighborhood concerns include preservation and use of open space.

•TED DARLING, a lifelong resident of Mid-Cambridge, is also a member of the Ward III Democratic Committee. He is employed by the Superior Court.

•ROBERT EDBROOKE, a teacher, is a member of the Neighborhood Tennis Committee and the Mid-Cambridge City Park Committee.

•JOAN LORENTZ, MCNA Membership Secretary and long-time Chairperson, is a teacher of the deaf and a speech/language therapist. She is a Mid-Cambridge homeowner and a member of the Democratic City Committee.

•RICHARD MAKMAN is a member of the neighborhood crime watch. His other interests include downzoning and traffic problems and Central Square development.

•KEN MCLAUGHLIN is Chairperson of the Longfellow School PTA and coaches the Cambridge Youth Soccer League. He is a coordinator of substance abuse programs.

•JEREMY MOSKOW is a member of the Cambridge Condominium Network, the Riverbend Park Trust, and the Cambridge Property Owners Association.

•JOHN PITKIN, MCNA Chairman, is also a member of the Board of Traffic and Parking. He is the parent of two CRLS students, and his concerns include neighborhood preservation and congestion.

ABOUT THE MID-CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association is a nonpartisan organization that promotes efforts to maintain the quality of life in Mid-Cambridge.

The Association takes stands on issues affecting the neighborhood, providing public forums for discussion, lobbying city officials and departments, and appearing before appropriate agencies; sponsors candidates' nights; presents Neighborhood Beautification Awards; periodically publishes this newsletter; and hosts occasional social activities.

Among the projects in which MCNA has played an instrumental role have been the creation of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District, the Mid-Cambridge City Park, the Inman Square Triangle Park, and the down-zoning of most of our neighborhood.

All residents and business people in the neighborhood are welcomed to join MCNA. We charge no dues (although contributions to cover costs of newsletters, neighborhood meetings, etc., are encouraged). To join, or to obtain further information, write MCNA, P.O. Box 904, Cambridge, MA 02238, or phone Joan Lorentz, Membership Secretary, at 547-8936 (evenings).

M.C.N.A.
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Copy of the MCNA News, from the Mid-Cam-
bridge Neighborhood Association dated Novem-
ber, 1986 Re: neighborhood meeting on
November 13th to discuss various neighbor-
hood concerns.

In City Council,

November 3, 1986

Placed on file