

City of Cambridge

The Special Committee on CASPAR siting held a public meeting on Thursday, December 17, 1992. Present at the meeting were: Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair of the Committee; Councillor Sheila T. Russell, Councillor Alice K. Wolf, Rev. Willard Williams, Central Square Clergy; Tony Cicciarello, Somerville Mayor's Office; Frances Wirta, Ward 4 Democratic Committee; Judge Lawrence Feloney, CASPAR Board; Ronald Suduiko, M.I.T.; Gary Stiller, Central Square Neighborhood Coalition; Cathy Hoffman, Ward 5 Democratic Committee; Greg Miller, CASPAR; Anita Shipman, Council of Elders; and Scott Levitan, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association.

Councillor Myers began the meeting with a discussion of the December 10, 1992 meeting. Councillor Russell said that people were very angry at the meeting and the committee should have something more to tell people. Frances Wirta said that she believes that the committee has to look at the question of what Central Square would be like without CASPAR. The committee must look at what the needs of Central Square are and should not get involved in a distant siting. Ron Suduiko said that he believed that meeting was largely negative and that he hopes the committee can come back from that point to make progress.

Judge Feloney said that he had hoped that we had discussed the issue of location near the Square and was disappointed to hear that there were many who would be opposed to almost any location in Cambridge. Rev. Williams said that he did not expect the level of bitterness. He added that there should be meetings with neighbors of proposed sites. His preference is still 380 Green Street. Greg Miller agreed with Frances Wirta that it is critical to the siting process to come to a consensus that Central Square is better off with CASPAR.

Councillor Myers said that he heard two perspectives expressed on Central Square: One was that residents are feeling inundated with daily life issues in Central Square, so much so that they couldn't focus on CASPAR; the second was the expansion of circles of positive locations, which could lead to unrealistic demands for how far away CASPAR should be sited. He added that he found that in later private conversations with many residents who had attended, they were more willing to talk. While the committee should keep in mind the community perspective, it should keep on with its planned work.

Councillor Myers then reported on the results of the Citizen Input Form and distributed a compilation of the responses which he had prepared. (Attachment 1) Fran Wirta noted that no clear mandate emerged. Jill Herold added that the responses show that the visibility of issues of homelessness and CASPAR's services has been increased.

The Committee then began to discuss the site review process for considering the additional proposed sites. Fran Wirta suggested the committee breaking down into small groups. Judge Feloney suggested that more work be put into sites that are available. Greg Miller distributed copies of proposed site selection criteria.

Councillor Wolf said that as part of site criteria, the committee has to come to grips with the issue of whether CASPAR will make Central Square better or worse. The committee itself must be clear on its position. Councillor Myers said that he is thinking about a subcommittee on Central Square. Greg Miller noted that CASPAR had met with the Mayor's Central Square Committee and had a very positive exchange. Councillor Russell said that at some point, perhaps the committee should take a vote on it. Councillor Myers said that in light of the feeling expressed at the community meeting, he believes that the committee should spend a great deal of time discussing the issues of the quality of life in Central Square. He suggested proceeding with the sites on the table without taking a vote at this time about a requirement of proximity.

Councillor Wolf said that the issues of Central Square are quite profound and longstanding. She said that she believes that the committee has to state its position regarding proximity because the issue will just keep on surfacing. Frances Wirta said that although at this time the committee can proceed, to look at the sites presently on the table. At some point she expects that a vote on the criteria of proximity will be necessary. Ron Suduiko urged that the committee proceed expeditiously. Councillor Russell said that she believes the criteria for site selection should be stated. One of the criteria that has been used by the committee is proximity to Central Square.

Anita Shipman said that if there is going to be further discussion on Central Square issues, the forms should be narrowed to specific questions that can be answered.

Scott Levitan said that the history of the process has been trying to address and work through compartmentalized pieces of the issue. He said that he is not sure that there would be any opposition to CASPAR by Central Square residents if all the other issues were solved, for example, Ken's Pub. Frances Wirta added other issues, the streets, and the liquor store opening times. She asked whether there were other issues. Gary Stiller said he thought people were afraid of moving CASPAR any closer to Central Square than it is now. Councillor Russell suggested that Alex Rodriguez and Commissioner Anderson come to a committee meeting to address some of these issues.

Councillor Myers moved on to the structure for looking at the alternative sites. He asked the committee for recommendations as to process. Cathy Hoffman asked whether Community Development could give staff support to do a feasibility analysis. Gary Stiller proposed that one committee look at all the sites. Jill Herold noted that Community Development could address zoning and physical feasibility but there are other issues. It was agreed that Councillor Russell's site committee would be the committee to evaluate the sites. Councillor Myers said that he would work with this committee.

The committee will also look at proximity to Central Square. The Community Development Department will be requested to report by January 14, 1992 (January 7 if possible) on the following for each site:

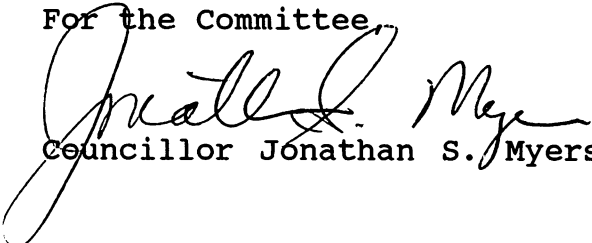
- size;
- description;
- cost of property;
- Cost of converting to meet CASPAR's needs;
- Existing leases and tenants;
- zoning;
- what surrounds the site;
- accessibility to Central Square from residents point of view; and
- availability

Councillor Myers turned the discussion to Central Square issues. He said he would like to establish and work with a subcommittee to develop information on what are the issues for Central Square residents. He asked Rev. Williams if he would also serve. Councillor Wolf suggested having the Central Square residents on the larger committee participate and that the subcommittee compile a list of issues. She suggested that they work with the Mayor's Commission. Scott Levitan, Gary Stiller, Cathy Hoffman and Frances Wirta all agreed to be on the subcommittee. Councillor Myers said this subcommittee would aim to report back by January 14, 1993.

It was agreed that Commissioner Anderson and Alex Rodriguez will be invited to the January 14, 1993 meeting and that the next full committee meeting is January 14, 1993. There will be subcommittee meeting in the interim and presentations by the subcommittees at this time.

Councillor Wolf raised the issue of the streets. She noted that under the land disposition ordinance, the City Council must hold a hearing within six weeks of receipt of the Planning Board report. She will ask the Mayor to schedule the hearing for January 11, 1993. She noted that the City Council is not required to vote at that time.

For the Committee,


Councillor Jonathan S. Myers,

COMPILATION OF CITIZEN INPUT FORM

Forty-three questionnaires were completed. Many with extensive comments.

A. CASPAR

1. Had you heard of CASPAR prior to the current siting effort?

Twenty nine responded Yes. Thirteen responded No.

2. Are you familiar with the range of CASPAR services in addition to the proposed Emergency Services Center?

Twenty five responded Yes. Sixteen responded No.

3. Do you believe that it would be an asset for the City of Cambridge to have an Emergency Service Center to serve homeless drug and alcohol users providing issues related to the siting could be resolved.

Thirty three responded Yes. Two responded No. Three were Undecided.

B. City Homeless Services

4. How serious do you believe the homeless problem in the City of Cambridge is? ranging from not at all serious to very serious.

Twenty three responded Very Serious. Eleven responded Serious.
One responded Somewhat Serious. One responded Not Serious.

5. Have you heard of the city's Multi-Service Center on Brookline Street?

Twenty three responded Yes. Thirteen responded No.

6. What in addition to what's been discussed tonight do you believe the City should do for its homeless population?

There were a range of responses. Prominently mentioned were: produce more affordable housing and more job training. Also were mentioned was increased childcare. Others mentioned included support for rent control, pay toilets, more SRO's, increased welfare benefits, increased outreach, and less focus in Central Square

C. Particular Siting Issues

7. With regard to the siting of the proposed facility, do you believe it is important that the facility be located within walking distance of Central Square?

Eight responded Yes. Twenty six responded No. One responded Undecided.

8. What factors do you think the Committee should consider in terms of siting the facility?

The largest response was away from residential neighborhoods with nineteen respondents. Six people sited the needs of the guests and the facility itself such as adequate space and transportation and proximity to health services. Four sited away from alcohol establishments. Two sited using a vacant building and two sited establishing specific siting criteria.

9. Which of the proposed site(s) do you think the Committee should most vigorously pursue?

Five respondents each said the Fire Station and Green Street. Four said the Volvo site. Three each said Binney Street and Danica. One said Windsor and State Street. Two said existing site. One said Avon Hill. Five said they did not know.

10. Which one(s) would you exclude for consideration, and what are your reasons?

Fifteen respondents said Green Street. Six each said Danica and not in Central Square. Four said Firehouse. Three said Windsor Street. One each said Volvo, Binney Street and All.

3.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report from the Special Committee on
CASPAR for a meeting held on Thursday,
December 17, 1992 relative to CASPAR
being located in the Central Square
area.

In City Council,

February 1, 1993

*Report accepted
Placed on file*