

City of Cambridge

The Special Committee on CASPAR held a public hearing on the issue of a site for the relocation of the CASPAR Shelter on October 27, 1992 at 7:30 p.m. at the Graham and Parks Elementary School at 15 Upton Street. Present at the hearing were the following members of the Special Committee: Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair, Councillor Sheila T. Russell; Councillor Alice K. Wolf; Judge Lawrence Feloney, CASPAR Board of Directors; Rev. Willard Williams, Central Square Clergy Association; Carl Barron, Central Square Business Association; Catherine Hoffman, Ward 5 Democratic Committee; Dentist Gary Stiller, Central Square Coalition; Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services; Superintendent Kal Kantor, Police Department; Win Poor, Executive Director, CASPAR Shelter; Scott Levitan, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association; Frances Wirta, Ward 4 Democratic Committee, Ronald Suduiko, MIT. Also present were Councillor Edward N. Cyr, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., City Manager Robert W. Healy and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury.

Councillor Myers called the meeting to order at 7:50 p.m. He welcomed the many members of the public in attendance, introduced the members of the committee, described the program for the evening, and delineated the principles to which all members of the committee have agreed:

1. The placement of CASPAR into a permanent facility is a priority.
2. The process must be geared to hearing and understanding everyone's point of view.
3. The Special Committee has taken no position on the propose site. The proposed site and other alternatives will be evaluated as part of the Committee's proceedings.
4. The Committee sees a need to involve the community in the decision-making process and the final decision that is made.

Councillor Myers introduced Ron Suduiko, Assistant to the President of MIT, to describe MIT's proposal. Mr. Suduiko described the history of CASPAR's location on MIT property. In 1974 CASPAR began serving homeless alcoholics in Central Square. Five years later, after MIT purchased a property which both MIT and CASPAR each were negotiating for, without either knowing that the other was involved, MIT agreed that CASPAR could use its vacant lot at Albany Street. Throughout the years, there have been many search efforts for a permanent location for CASPAR. MIT has participated on a City task force for such a search and has conducted its own searches.

Earlier this year, MIT identified 380 Green Street as a

potential location, and brought it to the attention of the City Manager and the CASPAR Board. Both the City Manager and the CASPAR Board thought the site had potential to become a permanent location for CASPAR. MIT has proposed to purchase the site, rehab it to CASPAR's specifications, and deed it to the City for lease to CASPAR. In exchange, MIT is requesting that the City deed to MIT certain portions of streets which it sees as mostly within the MIT campus area. MIT has acquired an option agreement for 380 Green Street, which expires December 31, 1992.

Councillor Myers then introduced Councillor Wolf to speak about the City Council's process for consideration of the portion of the proposal relating to the disposition of city streets. Councillor Wolf described the process required by Ch. 2.110 of the Cambridge Municipal Code whenever there is a proposal to transfer any interest in any land belonging to the City. She announced that there would be a public hearing of the Ordinance Committee on November 4, 1992 to consider the details of the proposed street transfer.

Thereupon Councillor Myers introduced Win Poor, Executive Director of the CASPAR Shelter, to describe the facility that CASPAR would run at the 380 Green Street site. Mr. Poor described the planned facility. He said that there would be a maximum of 55 guests per night. There would be a health care facility, and provisions for counseling, educational and employment programs and daily twelve-step meetings. In addition, CASPAR is committed to establishing an outreach program with staff who would be out in the Central Square area to assist persons to the shelter and keep shelter guests from being a nuisance to the neighborhood. A proposal for that outreach program has been completed, and he is confident that if CASPAR has a permanent site, it will be funded.

Councillor Myers then announced that Councillor Russell, who has been leading the Committee's efforts to look at what other site possibilities exist, would describe those efforts. Councillor Russell reported on the alternative site search. She said that she is presently exploring sixteen other sites. She noted that wherever possible, she is trying to concentrate on locations that are not residential, but that in a city like Cambridge, such locations are not common. She requested that anyone with suggestions about alternative sites call her at the City Council office.

Next, Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, described her efforts to develop objective criteria by which the impacts of placing CASPAR in Central Square could be measured. She stated that in its preliminary work, the Human Services Department has identified the following elements for assessment of impact: residential property values, the general impact on the community in the area of quality of life, the impact on the business community, and impacts in the area of crime.

She said that since the proposed shelter is somewhat different from other existing facilities in Cambridge, the Committee has decided to look at the impacts on their neighborhoods of other similar facilities in other cities in the Commonwealth.

Ms. Herold said that the Committee has also looked at information in the area of concentration of facilities. Of the thirteen neighborhoods in Cambridge, ten have some sort of community residence. Only four are larger than 10-12 residents, one of those is CASPAR's existing facility, and of those four, are located in the Central Square area. Regarding the issue of concentration, Ms. Herold noted that for many years the City had an ordinance that capped the number of facilities that could be located in any one neighborhood, but the City was required to rescind the ordinance under the federal fair housing laws.

Next, Councillor Myers introduced Superintendent Kal Kantor of the Cambridge Police Department. Supt. Kantor provided information regarding arrests of persons who gave the CASPAR shelter on Albany Street as an address between the years of 1987 and 1991. There were an average of thirteen violent crimes per year committed by persons who gave that address, with the majority being violence of one street person against another, and four burglaries per year of businesses. There were approximately 55 arrests per year for nuisance-type activities. Supt. Kantor added that the Cambridge Police Department supports the relocation of CASPAR to another site in Cambridge, whether that site be 380 Green Street or some other site.

Councillor Myers then announced that the meeting would be open to public testimony. He outlined the ground rules for testimony, and requested that in consideration of the number of persons who wanted to speak, that each speaker limit his or her remarks to one to one and a half minutes in length. The following testimony was presented:

John O'Brien, Director of Cambridge Hospital, said that from the point of view of a health care professional, he supports the plan for relocation of CASPAR to 380 Green Street and believes it will help strengthen the fragile network of substance abuse services. He added that the Cambridge Hospital, located in a residential neighborhood, serves several hundred substance abusers, including 160 methadone clients, without disruption to the neighborhood.

Wallace Thurston, 10 Soden Street, said that it is inappropriate to locate CASPAR on Green Street because there are already enough facilities in Central Square.

Steven Bordly, formerly of 200 Fayerweather Street, now of Los Angeles, said that, speaking as a recovering alcoholic, he believes it is important to keep recovery facilities here because if

recovery is not available, families are destroyed. He added that he is currently a real estate appraiser, and in this capacity, he has never seen a negative adjustment to neighboring property values based on the location of a facility.

Jim Koger, 415 Franklin Street, said that the police cannot guarantee that there will not be problems from this shelter.

Greg Miller, Executive Director, CASPAR, said that CASPAR has been looking for a permanent site for this shelter for 20 years. CASPAR operates programs at six locations, most of them in Somerville, where all are located in residential neighborhoods.

John Buster, 12 Lee Street, said that he works in Central Square, and although he supports CASPAR, he does not believe that the Green Street location is a good site. He said that there is an increased hazard of tuberculosis, and there are other sites on Albany Street which would be more appropriate, for example, the Equipment Exchange building.

Lawrence McKinney, 881 Massachusetts Ave., said that he has been involved in drug abuse education for 20 years, and it is not the homeless alcoholics who are the worst nuisance, but rather the middleclass alcoholics who frequent bars like Drumlins.

Barbara Fee, 114 Pearl Street, said that as health care professional working in an intensive care facility, she has had to provide intensive service care to homeless persons who have been injured on the streets, she supports the shelter at the proposed location. She stated that the alcoholics are already there in Central Square; and she believes the closer proximity of the shelter to the alcoholics will improve rather than worsen the situation.

Fred Reece, 9 Woodrow Wilson Court, member of the Board of the Council on Aging (COA), said that he and the Board of the COA supports the proposed shelter location, because the people are Cambridge residents, and many of them are elderly.

Bob Martell, former resident of CASPAR Shelter, 240 Albany Street, said that he is now recovering and back in school. CASPAR helped him. He believes the problem of homeless alcoholics in Central Square will continue to exist regardless of whether the shelter is there. CASPAR helps to take care of the problem.

Richard Bulwear, 12 Pleasant Street, said that the services that CASPAR provides are necessary and needed. He supports CASPAR but is against its location in a residential community.

John Clifford, 57 Aberdeen Ave., co-owner of the Green Street Grill, said that he is against the location of CASPAR on Green Street. He has his children at his business on many occasions, and

the elderly people at the Manning Apartments will be bothered by the alcoholics.

Jane Sampson, 40 Inman Street, said that she is familiar with the problems of alcoholism and that she considers a wet shelter to be enabling. She lived in Chicago before Cambridge and worked for a Chicago bank that turned around areas like Central Square through development. Central Square is a problem and a shelter will make the problem worse.

Mike Goldrosen, 24 Corporal McTiernan Street, said that he was here as a neighbor and also representing the Bureau of Substance Abuse, a federal agency. He welcomes CASPAR as a neighbor and as a representative of the Bureau, he expects that the Green Street site will improve the effectiveness of the CASPAR program.

Harold Goldman, corner of Green and Hancock Street, said that he is against the proposed site. He has two children and alcoholics already trespass and urinate and vomit on his property. He believes MIT is engaging in cynical manipulation.

Bob LaTremouille, 348 Franklin Street, said that the Special Committee on CASPAR should hold all its meetings at night out in the community so that the public can be informed.

Amy Hahn, 174 Auburn Street, said that the alcoholics are already in Central Square and will stay here regardless of where the shelter is. If everyone says "Not in my backyard," the problem won't be solved. CASPAR has a good record; she is willing to give it a try.

Stephen Park, 10 Pleasant Street, said that the area around Green Street is very congested and that 380 Green Street is too small for use as a shelter.

Mary Westroff, 408 Putnam Avenue, said that she got a flyer that was frightening and unfair. Anyone could become homeless. She believes that the neighborhood should try to support the shelter.

Kim Fitzgerald, Central Square, said that she has been homeless for many years. CASPAR has helped thousands of people and has saved her life.

Karen Larsen, 7 Austin Park, Steering Committee, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association, said that when you look at the number of social services located in Central Square, you can see that Central Square is a very giving place, but CASPAR is too much. The square cannot take any more programs.

Kenneth Holmes, 35 Walden Street, President, Council on Aging Board, said that at the last board meeting, the board debated long

and hard, and ended up voting to support the proposed CASPAR site because CASPAR is really needed.

David Lax, 43 Hancock Street, said that there is already a significant homeless population on Green Street, and locating CASPAR there would make the problem worse.

Jack McCambridge, 45 Mt. Pleasant Street, said that now he has a job, but he lived on the streets and he would not have survived without shelters. The CASPAR residents are people, why can't they live in a residential neighborhood?

Ruth Fredericks, 35 Brookline Street, said that she supports CASPAR. Its work is excellent. There is a drunk and homeless population in Central Square, and even if the shelter is moved, it won't mean that that population will move.

Susan Perry, Chestnut Street, said that she is very disturbed that MIT is asking to buy anything from Cambridge. MIT is a traitorous institution.

Pam Moss, Bigelow Street, said that she has been educated at this hearing. CASPAR appears to do good work, but the neighborhood is fragile.

Bart Bustink, 49 Hancock Street, said that near Hancock Street is located one of the earliest opening liquor stores. He supports CASPAR but feels that other areas of the city bear less of the burden of their work. If CASPAR is to be here, he would appreciate a later opening time for the liquor store.

Mary Ellen Gardner, 63 Western Avenue questioned what percentage of CASPAR clients are drugs addicts. Is it 10% or 50%? She believes CASPAR's answers to this question have been inconsistent.

Claudia Hautenaumi, 54 Hancock Street, said that she works in Central Square at the Dance Center. Already parents do not want to send their children to the school because of the problems with the square. Central Square residents deserve the same quality of life as the rest of Cambridge, and that is not the case now.

Mike Roberts, Massachusetts Avenue, and also Co-Director, Homeless Civil Rights Center, said that the problem of the homeless alcoholics is already there in Central Square, and will be there regardless of whether the CASPAR shelter is located there.

Bet McArthur, McGee Street, said that she is confused about how CASPAR can guarantee a cap of 55 guests per night when their policy is not to turn anyone away. She understands that 75% of the shelter residents never seek treatment. Lots of elders are not at this meeting because they are afraid to go out at night.

Nancy Frul, Harvard Street, said that she wants to know what guarantees will be made to the residents if the crime rate goes up.

Maurice Silber, a dentist with an office at 14 Pleasant Street, said that he has been at that location for fourteen years and 380 Green Street is not an appropriate location. Central Square is trying to revitalize. That cannot happen if liquor stores are allowed to open at 7-8 in the morning and if Central Square becomes a dumping ground for every do-gooder agency in the city. CASPAR clientele are not the nicest people in the world.

Bruce Houghton, 82 Magazine Street, said that in the early 1970s, alcoholic street people died regularly on the street of Central Square. He worked on placing CASPAR at the MIT property on Albany Street, and he supports CASPAR at this site. He has looked at dozens of sites, and this is the best one he has seen. He believes there is a significant issue about trading the streets, but legal protections can address that.

Jay Pasualski, 10 Hancock Place, said he believes people on the Committee have already made up their minds. He said that CASPAR does not belong in this area: it will act as a magnet for more alcoholics.

Alan Aimlicke, 195 Erie Street, said he has two children who come to Central Square, so he has concerns about them. He is a supporter of CASPAR and has seen CASPAR struggle to find a site, but with so many facilities in Central Square, it starts losing its quality of life.

Kathy Wilkins, employee of CASPAR's detox facility, said there is a very fragile healthcare system in Cambridge. It is far safer to take care of people than not to. She said that for 90% of CASPAR's clients, the drug of choice is alcohol.

Martha Marvin, 52 Fayette Street, said that she previously lived on Line Street, by the Cambridge Hospital and was not aware that the hospital had treatment programs there. It was a good neighbor. She sees homeless people in Central Square now, and believes CASPAR should be given a chance.

Alan Steinert, Ash Street, Treasurer, CASPAR Board of Directors, said that CASPAR is limited to 55 beds by its funding agreements. CASPAR takes everyone who comes to it up to that number. He also said that CASPAR is committed to working closely with neighbors to address their concerns.

Dick Doyle, Co-Director, Homeless Coalition, spoke in support of CASPAR and said that it fills a serious need.

Liz Drake, 30 Inman Street, said she has been a Cambridge

resident for 30 years, and is a recovering alcoholic. She said alcoholics will be in Central Square regardless of the location of the shelter. She would rather see people who have this problem have shelter than live on the streets.

Phil Lichtner, Orchard Street, Somerville, said MIT and Harvard control Cambridge, and nothing like CASPAR would ever be located on Brattle Street.

Richard Packard, Cambridge, said that although he is sympathetic to CASPAR, concern over his neighborhood predominates. He has watched tenuous improvement.

Cheryl Kennedy, 47 Lopez Street, said that she works with a substance abuse community, and that this is not a new program, it is just relocation of an existing program. After much thought, she believes she would support location of the shelter on her block, even though she has four daughters, the youngest four years old, because she would want her daughters to see and learn a humane approach to dealing with persons with an illness.

Vickie Boris, 20 Soden Street, said that a wet shelter is not appropriate for a residential neighborhood. She works with the Riverside Community Neighborhood Watch, and Hoyt Field and Bishop Allen Drive are major crime areas.

Salim Kabawat, 145 Bishop Allen Drive, said that he was there representing his three kids and resents the guilt trip over not wanting the shelter in his neighborhood.

Peter Bruckner, 3 Williams Street, said he applauds the Committee's efforts to find an alternative site. That block of Green Street is narrow, with lots of services.

Bob Bulris, 20 Soden Street, Treasurer of Central Square Neighborhood Coalition, submitted a petition with 430 signatures in opposition to the 380 Green Street site.

Dr. Won Park, 10 Pleasant Street, said that he is against the location. He has been at this location for 19 years and has experienced many problems with crime.

Maureen Kennedy, 489 Green Street, said the homeless population hangs out on her porch now. She asked what happens when the shelter gets to capacity and said that she wants a guarantee that the shelter guests will treat her with respect.

Domenian Specksman, 34 Harvard Street, said she and her husband chose to live in Cambridge for its diversity, but she is dismayed that the City keeps on placing more services in Central Square. Her eight year old child cannot walk to school alone.

Muriel Brown, 353 Pearl Street, said that she is a lifelong resident of Cambridge and a member of the First Baptist Church. She has seen many alcoholics in Central Square and she has never seen a CASPAR worker pick up an alcoholic and take them to Albany Street.

Joseph Vera, 14 Soden Street, said that he is in favor of CASPAR being located on Green Street. It is a residence so it should be in a residential area. It is not the homeless who are involved in breaking and entering crimes. Alcoholics and drug addicts are handicapped persons, and when neighborhood groups interfere with their rights to access to housing in that neighborhood, they are violating the law.

Myra Hanley, 4 Austin Park, said that Central Square does its share already in supporting the homeless.

Kyle Gale, 56 Hancock Street, said that these homeless alcoholics are disgusting. There are two liquor stores in the area that open at 8 a.m., and the shelter will be right in between them.

Arlen Wolpert, Franklin Street, said that a systems dynamics analysis demonstrates that putting the shelter on Green Street will attract more alcoholics to Central Square.

Joanne Ciccarelli, Cambridge, said that the residents do not CASPAR in their neighborhood, and there are plenty of other possible locations.

Crystal Mazur, 76 Prospect Street, said that no one has talked about the real issues of alcoholism, and what is going to happen to sick people on the streets.

Susan Dooley, North Cambridge, Executive Director of Shelter, Inc., said that Central Square may have a disproportionate number of facilities, but that many of them, like her agency, grew as a response from the community to the conditions that are there. Services are most effective when they are provided where the need is greatest. This discussion is about relocating an existing facility, not that far from where it is currently located.

Sam Herbawi, Central Square, said that he supports the shelter, but not in its proposed location.

Les Kahn, 872 Massachusetts Avenue, said there is no logical connection between the issue of the location of the shelter and the disposition of the streets. MIT is a multi-billion dollar business.

Elaine Searing, 600 block of Green Street, said that she opposes the shelter at that location. Green Street is a conduit for alcoholics already.

Herbert Mellon, 195 Franklin Street, said that he is against the transfer of the streets to MIT. He already cannot park on his street.

At the conclusion of the public testimony, Councillor Myers announced that the members of the Committee would respond to questions raised by the public during the public testimony.

City Manager Robert Healy informed the public that problems that had been alluded to regarding the activities of alcoholics at 688-690 Green Street related to activities tolerated by private owner, not a shelter or agency, and that the City has taken this owner to court several times.

In response to questions about MIT's plans for the current location of the shelter at Albany Street, Ron Seduiko, MIT, said that MIT plans to use the lot for student housing.

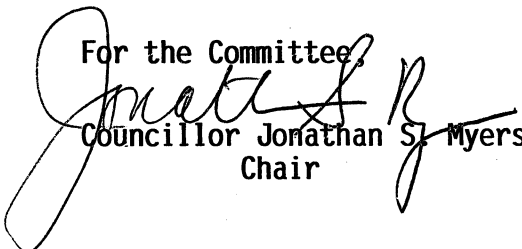
Win Poor, Director of CASPAR Shelter, said that the limit of 55 guests per night is firm; it is imposed by their funding contracts with the Department of Public Health. If CASPAR's outreach proposal is funded, CASPAR can transport any overflow by van to other facilities, generally in Boston. In general, CASPAR does not have many overflow requests for shelter. Approximately 70 people eat meals at CASPAR, and many of these people are not homeless, they are residents of Central Square who do not have enough money for food.

Regarding the issue of what percentage of CASPAR residents are drug users, Mr. Poor said that there may be 50% who use some kind of drug in addition to alcohol, but that he believes that intravenous drug users constitute less than 10% of the population.

Councillor Myers explained that the Committee would continue meeting on Thursdays at noon, and the public is welcome to attend. He said that the Committee intended to make a recommendation regarding the Green Street site no later than December 24, 1992.

Councillor Myers thanked the public and the Committee members and adjourned the hearing at 11:45 p.m.

For the Committee,


Councillor Jonathan S. Myers,
Chair

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

S-937

Special CASPAR Committee Report for
a hearing held on Tuesday, October 27,
1992 regarding a relocation site for a
permanent location for CASPAR.

In City Council,

November 19, 1992

*Report accepted
Placed on file*