

May 9, 1979

TO: Members of the Cambridge City Council

FROM: Mid-Cambridge Coalition for Longfellow Open Space

REGARDING: City Council Hearing on Longfellow Playground Space, May 14.

Enclosed is a copy of the material our committee prepared for City Manager James L. Sullivan.

April 23, 1979

Mr. James Leo Sullivan
City Manager
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

During the past three months, our Committee has carefully researched the problem of playground space for the Longfellow School. We have considered many possible strategies for acquiring playground space, and have met with neighborhood groups to discuss the alternatives.

We want to share with you the results of our research:

1. The city has long recognized the critical shortage of playground space for the Longfellow School. The original construction plans from the 1930's included the taking of residential property behind the school, including the Church on Antrim Street, for use as a playground. This recommendation was made again in 1970 by the Planning Department. A similar recommendation was made again in 1977 by a School Department report. The statistics given in the 1970 Planning Department report show that the Longfellow School is at the bottom of the list in terms of playground space, yet we are number 6 in terms of enrollment. (See attachments.)
2. Lack of open and recreational space is a chronic and increasing concern in our neighborhood. The Recreational Open Space Plan, completed in 1977, shows our neighborhood to be at the bottom of every type of need related list in terms of open space and recreational facilities. (Several pages from this report are attached.)
3. A survey of all property within a 500 foot radius of the Longfellow School has been completed by our Committee. A copy is attached to this letter. As you can see, there is only one piece of vacant property in this area, conveniently located next to the Lee Street tot lot. The rest of the area is densely populated with a combination of commercial and residential property. The taking of any currently occupied space, residential of commercial, would take years: city precedents suggest that several more generations of Longfellow School children will have

no playground space before this alternative would come to pass. Our Committee feels this is too long to wait.

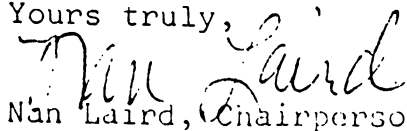
4. Any alternative is an expensive alternative. A financial survey undertaken by our Committee reveals that Neighborhood 6 is a prime development area in the City. Since 1974, the city-wide increases to the tax base total about \$8 million. Neighborhood 6 alone has contributed approximately \$2.5 million to this total, representing an astounding 33% of the city-wide total since 1974! This does not include new developments on Harvard Street or Ellery Square. We feel it is now time for the city to invest in us!

In summary, our school needs a playground, our neighborhood needs more open and recreational space, we have a unique development opportunity located near the school, and our taxpayers form the backbone of the city's increased tax base. We feel that there is only one viable possibility for space in the near future, and that is the Pelrine property on West Street. Combined with the Lee Street tot lot, this area would provide about one half acre of playground space. While this is still inadequate to meet our school's playground needs, it represents an important first step towards a satisfactory long term solution.

We are here today to seek your support in going to the City Council to ask for the taking of the property by eminent domain and for money to support its development as a school playground. We would not ask for so stringent a measure, if it were not so clearly necessary. Development of this property is imminent. The city must act quickly to take advantage of this unique opportunity.

This is a critical issue for our neighborhood, and we hope we can count on your help.

Yours truly,



Nan Laird, Chairperson
Mid-Cambridge Coalition for Longfellow Open Space
156 Hancock Street
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Joan Lorentz, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association
Phyllis Andella, Co-chairperson, Longfellow Community School
Jane Richards President, Longfellow PTA
Margaret Carrol, Master, Longfellow School
Sara Mae Berman, Cambridge School Committee
Francis Spinks, MCNA Coordinating Committee
John Pitkin, MCNA Coordinating Committee
David Sullivan, MCNA Coordinating Committee
George Metzger

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND STATISTICS

SOURCE: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDING STUDY

PLANNING DEPARTMENT, CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
NOVEMBER, 1970

SCHOOL	PLAYGROUND, INCLUDING ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOOD FACILITIES	
HARRINGTON	8.6	ACRES
TOBIN	4.2	ACRES
FITZGERALD	4.2	ACRES
KENNEDY	3.1	ACRES
MORSE	1.74	ACRES
KING	.8	ACRES
HAGGERTY	.59	ACRES
PEABODY	.57	ACRES
AGASSIZ	.47	ACRES
FLETCHER	.33	ACRES
LINCOLN	.25	ACRES
ROBERTS	.17	ACRES
WEBSTER	.11	ACRES
GORE	--	
LONGFELLOW	--	

Recreation Space

There is no recreation space to speak of at the Longfellow School, only the small well in the "U" of the building. This may provide play space for the lower grades, but it certainly does not meet the needs of the upper grades.

As with the other schools in this Area lacking recreation space, the density of the housing around Longfellow makes expansion difficult and expensive. Due to the extreme lack of recreation space in the Mid-Cambridge neighborhood, consideration should be given to a long-term program of acquiring properties behind the school as they are offered for sale.

SOURCE: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDING STUDY
PLANNING DEPARTMENT, CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
NOVEMBER, 1970

3. Playground Space: Many of the older schools have little or no outdoor playground space. A long-range playground acquisition plan formulated with neighborhood participation should be developed. Of particular concern here are schools with neither sufficient outdoor space nor indoor gym facilities.

SOURCE: ELEMENTARY FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT PLANS: OPTIONS
PREPARED FOR MEMBERS OF THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MAY, 1977

Table E

Neighborhood Oriented Open Space and City-Wide Oriented Space

Ngbrhd.	Number of Acres	NRPA Stds.	% of Stds. Met	Number of Acres	NRPA Stds.	% of Stds. Met
1	7.3	14.5	50	.3	43.5	1
2	—	10.1	0	41.0	30.9	132
3	2.5	18.7	13	5.4	56.3	9
4	5.6	18.6	30	—	56.4	0*
5	5.9	22.9	25	19.8	69.1	28
6	2.0	37.1	4	1.8	110.9	2
7	4.7	24.4	19	8.2	72.6	11
8	.4	14.6	2	1.0	43.4	2*
9	6.8	25.2	25	16.9	80.8	20
10	25.0	27.7	90	32.7	82.3	39
11	5.0	30.4	16	13.8	90.6	15
12	2.3	1.4	164	60.0	4.6	1304
13	1.0	4.2	23	79.5	11.8	673
Total	68.4	249.8	27	280.3	753.2	37

SOURCE: CAMBRIDGE RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PLAN

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

APRIL, 1977

Table G - Summary of Supply Deficiencies

I: Neighborhoods with Shortages in Various Types of Recreation, Open Space and Selected Recreation Facilities (The 6 Neighborhoods with the Greatest Shortage are indicated for each category)

Type of Overall Shortage	Neighborhood												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Active Open Space	x		x	x		x	x	x					
Passive Open Space	x		x	x		x		x			x		
Neighborhood Open Space		x	x			x	x	x			x		
City-wide Open Space	x		x	x		x	x	x					
Playlots		x	x				x		x		x	x	
Neighborhood Parks	x		x	x		x		x			x		
Tennis Courts			x	x		x		x	x	x			
Baseball Fields		x		x	x	x	x	x					
Softball Fields				x	x	x	x			x	x		
Basketball Courts				x	x	x	x		x		x		
Shortages (Frequency)	4	3	7	8	3	9	7	7	3	2	6	1	0
Six Neighborhoods with most shortages			x	x		x	x	x			x		

SOURCE: CAMBRIDGE RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PLAN

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

APRIL, 1977

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Comm. from the Mid-Cambridge Coalition for
Longfellow Open Space re: City Council
hearing on Longfellow Playground Space.

In City Council,

May 14, 1979

5/14/79

Referred to the
Hearing at Longfellow
School at 8 PM