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SKIP SCHLOMING
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20 October 1997

Cambridge City Councillors
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Councillors:

I would like to bring to your attention a problem of safety for our school children at traffic crossings.

I vividly recall the following three incidents within the last six months:

- 1) On Monday, October 6, at the intersection of Columbia and Harvard Streets, the school crossing guard deliberately stopped on-coming traffic against a green light giving autos the right of way and against a "Don't Walk" light, to let children cross.
- 2) About six months ago, at the crosswalk in front of Harrington School on Cambridge Street, the school crossing guard stopped two on-coming cars to let children cross when there was a long gap in traffic after these cars. The guard did not wait for that gap.
- 3) About a month ago, at the corner of Newton Street and Webster Avenue in Somerville (I include this example because it suggests a general pattern), a school crossing guard abruptly stopped my car (about 15 feet of warning) to let children cross at a stop-sign-only intersection. He could have waited for a gap in traffic.

My point is that there appears to be a pattern of some school crossing guards attempting to override traffic signals and stop on-coming vehicles rather than following the traffic signals and waiting for safer gaps in the traffic. (All of these were situations of light traffic. I would agree that heavy traffic situations *may* require stopping traffic when there are no traffic signals to regulate it.)

The danger, of course, is that the cars may not stop. Drivers are getting conflicting messages: "go" from the signal and "stop" from the guard. Should the safety of children depend on ambivalent instructions?

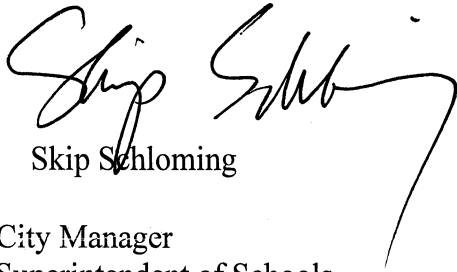
Moreover, children are being taught, by this example, to ignore traffic lights, to ignore "Walk/Don't Walk" signals, and to step in front of on-coming traffic (and count

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on drivers to stop) rather than wait for gaps – practices they may well copy on their own when they don't have assistance from a crossing guard. I know it's common for adults to ignore traffic rules, but for the safety of children, we should not be encouraging this disregard.

I hope the City will take some appropriate action before we have a terrible tragedy.

Thank you.



Skip Schloming

Cc: City Manager
Superintendent of Schools

Consent Communication #2

S-689

Communication was received from Skip Schloming, transmitting concern regarding the safety for school children at traffic crossings.

In City Council November 3, 1997

Referred to City
manager for
report

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