

Street Artists' Guild

c/o Stephen Baird, P.O. Box 570, Cambridge, MA 02238 U.S.A. Telephone: 617/522-3407

The Honorable Alice Wolf
Mayor of Cambridge
City Hall
795 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mayor Wolf and Cambridge City Council:

The Street Artists' Guild would first like to thank you and the Cambridge City Council for your work on the new Street Performer's Ordinance. The Street Artists' Guild considers the new ordinance to be a vast improvement over the old one. The Guild has and will continue to work with the city to insure the ordinance is fairly implemented.

Specifically, the most debated element of the new ordinance was the allowable volume level (Db). Cambridge residents even testified they would not care who or when artists played if the volume level did not disturb them. However, the city has only enforced the 11:00 pm curfew and the permit requirements of the new ordinance. Neither the Cambridge Arts Council nor the Cambridge Police have, to my knowledge or any other Guild members' knowledge, checked sound levels with a decibel meter. Sound level enforcement is the most critical element for making the new ordinance work. It will insure fewer resident complaints. It will also insure that artists do not interfere with each other.

I have also received numerous calls from artists who cannot afford the \$25 permit fee. Morris dance teams who often do not collect money, high school chamber groups trying to raise money for school trips, and other citizens only experimenting with new ideas for a day or two are being discouraged from performing on the streets of Cambridge. I personally believe the streets are an important avenue for new cultural ideas. The purpose of the new ordinance was to nurture these new ideas, not just make it possible for professionals to become more established. The Guild has offered artists loans to cover the cost of the permits to lessen the tensions over this issue, but we hope the City Council will reconsider the fee structure immediately.

The 11:00 curfew on all performances has hurt the economic viability of many Guild members. Surviving as artists in the Commonwealth is becoming increasingly difficult. The majority of artists do not have medical insurance and most are barely able to pay for their food and rent. Street Artists, like most artists, earn the majority of their income on weekends. The 11:00 curfew has cut 20-50% of Guild members' income. The street performing season is actually quite short, 10 to 12 weekends a year (depending on the rain factor) between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The Guild hopes the Cambridge City Council will reconsider expanding the performance times to 12 midnight on weekends in commercial areas.

The Guild will continue to work with the City in keeping the streets of Cambridge safe, exciting and accessible for all its citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Baird". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Stephen Baird

July 9, 1990

Mayor Alice Wolf
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mayor Wolf:

I am writing on behalf of the Ha'Penny Morris Team regarding the proposed permit fee for performers wishing to entertain in Cambridge.

Ha'Penny Morris has been in existence for 12 years. We are a "local" team, which means many of our members live and work in Cambridge. As with the English ritual dance we perform, many of our events have become traditional - such as May Day beginning at Dawn at the footbridge by the Charles and ending at Holyoke Center. Many teams dance regularly in and around Cambridge, relish the opportunity to entertain and in the process, bring a little color, music and life to the streets.

The proposed \$25 fee per performer would prohibit any morris team from dancing in Cambridge, as a team would have at least six dancers and one musician performing. Even a ceiling of \$100 would not allow the average morris team the opportunity to perform, as we do this for fun, not profit.

Please consider the ramifications of such an across-the-board charge. Without individuals and groups such as Morris teams on the streets of Cambridge, the city will lose some of its vibrancy, some of its "joie de vivre." I urge you to reconsider this action, and at least include a clause which excludes morris teams from the fee.

Best regards,

Marcie Van Cleave

Marcie Van Cleave
1950 Mass. Ave.
Cambridge 02140
617/491-6083

cc: Stephen Baird
Folk Arts Network

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Comm. from Stephen Baird, Street Artists' Guild in support of the Street Performance Ordinance with a request that the fee structure be reconsidered.

In City Council,

July 30, 1990

Placed on file