



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

BETH RUBENSTEIN
Deputy Director for
Community Development

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: ^{BK} Beth Rubenstein, Acting Assistant City Manager
for Community Development

DATE: January 6, 1999

RE: Response to City Council Order #034 dated 12/14/98:
Report on Hiring an Independent Traffic Engineer and a
Mediator/Facilitator to Work with the East Cambridge
Planning Team

The participation of residents in reviewing projects and resolving concerns is extremely beneficial and the review processes required for the Cambridge Research Park project afford this type of involvement. As described in more detail below, I believe there are significant differences between the review processes for the Cambridge Research Park (CRP) and the W.R. Grace projects. The CRP project is subject to review processes that allow residents to work productively with the City, the Planning Board and the developer without requiring a mediator.

The Cambridge Research Park development proposal is currently under review for a PUD special permit. The Planning Board issued a preliminary finding on December 15, 1998. A second public hearing is required under the zoning ordinance before the Planning Board issues a final determination. The development is also subject to the provisions of the recently-adopted IPOP and PTDM Ordinances which require preparation and approval of detailed traffic studies and mitigation plans as well as a determination of no substantial adverse impact on city traffic by the Planning Board. Finally, the project's impacts are under review by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and must meet the requirements of the MEPA regulations.

A professional traffic engineer is under contract to the City to assist the Planning Board and city staff in assessing the traffic impacts of the project and the adequacy of proposed mitigation. The consultant, Barry Pell from Rizzo Associates, has provided similar services to the City for a number of years, has extensive experience with Cambridge traffic and trip reduction and other traffic mitigation strategies, and has conducted peer reviews on behalf of the City of numerous traffic studies prepared by developers. Mr. Pell has performed a peer review of the Traffic Impact Study (TIA) prepared for Cambridge Research Park

which led the Planning Board to request significant revisions of the study. Mr. Pell is highly regarded for his skills and advocacy on behalf of the City and its residents.

The City also used a traffic consultant from Rizzo Associates to assist during the rezoning process for the Industry C district in Alewife which contains the W.R. Grace site. This process was facilitated by an outside consultant with extensive experience in mediation. A mediator was retained for several reasons. First, a development moratorium had been placed on the district which limited the time available for the Planning Board to propose new zoning language to balance the needs of the community and the property owner. Second, W.R. Grace was proposing as-of-right development on the site, which afforded very limited review by the public. Third, discussions with community residents over several years about various development proposals and issues pertaining to contamination at the Grace site had not resulted in a resolution of the site's future. Therefore, when it was proposed to bring in a mediator to facilitate the rezoning process, neighborhood residents, the property owner and the developer were all willing to participate in hopes of achieving consensus.

As described above, the public approval processes required for the Cambridge Research Park project are extensive. The East Cambridge Planning Team and other Cambridge residents have played a very active role to date in giving input to and discussing the project with the developer, the Planning Board, city staff and MEPA and these discussions are on-going. As a result, significant changes to the project are being made. The Planning Board will take public comment at future hearings on the project both in connection with the PUD Special Permit and the IPOP permit. City staff will also continue to work with residents of East Cambridge and the developer in support of the Planning Board process to resolve any legitimate concerns residents may have. Finally, the proponent is required to file an EIR which will result in a MEPA certificate incorporating public comment.



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31.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

January 11, 1999

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 40, regarding a report on hiring an independent traffic engineer and a mediator/facilitator to work with the East Cambridge Planning Team, received from Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #31

Relative to AR 40, regarding
a report on hirng an independent
traffic engineer and a mediator/
facilitator to work with the
East Cambridge Planning Team.

In City Council January 11, 1999

CHARTER RIGHT

BY Councillor Sullivan

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1/25/99

Referred to the City Manager on motion
of Councillor Toomey.