



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139 • (617) 498-9017

OFFICE OF
THE CITY CLERK

March 21, 1984

Robert McQueen
House Clerk
House of Representatives
The State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Mr. McQueen:

Pursuant to the request of the City Council, I am forwarding to you for filing with the Massachusetts House of Representatives the attached Home Rule legislation entitled "AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS IN THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE". Also enclosed please find an order adopted by the Cambridge City Council on March 19, 1984 approving the filing of this legislation.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Very truly yours,

Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.

PEH/mh

Enclosures



City of Cambridge

Agenda Item Number Eight

IN CITY COUNCIL

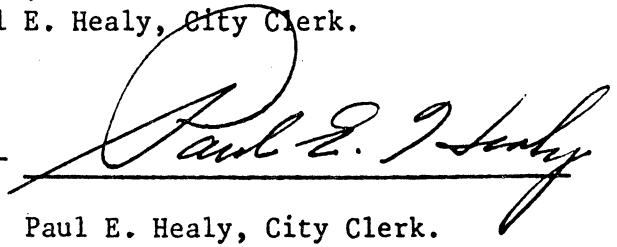
February 27, 1984

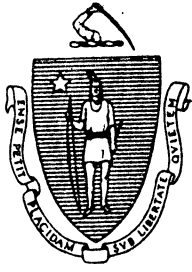
ORDERED: That this City Council go on record approving the filing of the attached legislation entitled "AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS IN THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE."

In City Council March 12, 1984.
Adopted by a yea and nay vote:-
Yeas 5; Nays 2; Absent 2.
Attest:- Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-


Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

IN THE YEAR ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR

AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS IN THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

WHEREAS, the deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, therefore it is hereby declared to be emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding the provisions of section twenty-four of chapter forty-one of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary, the City Manager of the City of Cambridge may appoint a three member board of assessors in accordance with the provisions of its charter and shall designate one member as chairman who shall also be the director of the department of assessment administration within said city.

The remaining members of the Board of Assessors shall be subject to the direction of and report to said director of said department.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
in General Court assembled.

The undersigned, citizens of Cambridge, respectfully
petition for the passage of the accompanying bill or resolve, and/or for legislation relative to the
appointment of assessors in the City of Cambridge.

Petitioners are requested to sign names and addresses legibly.

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David E. Sullivan

113 Inman St.

Alue K. Wolf

48 Huron Avenue

Andrea Graham

189 Western Ave.

Thais H. Aubrey

26 Lowell Street



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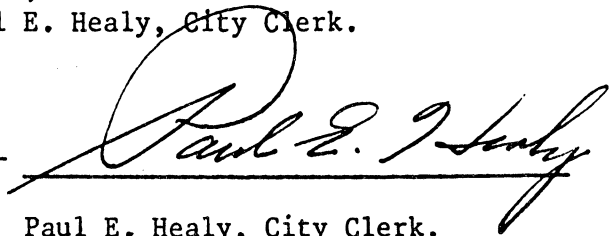
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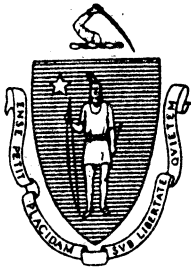
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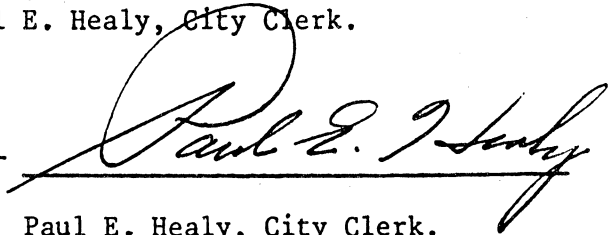
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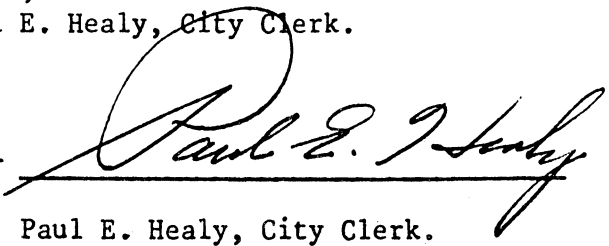
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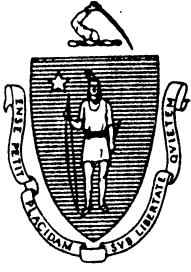
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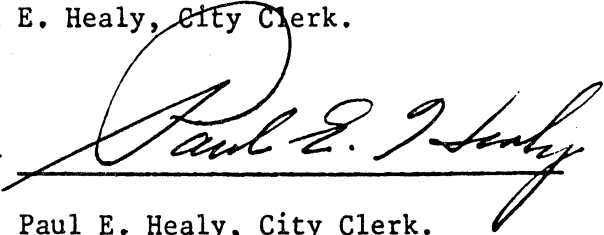
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul E. Healy". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.



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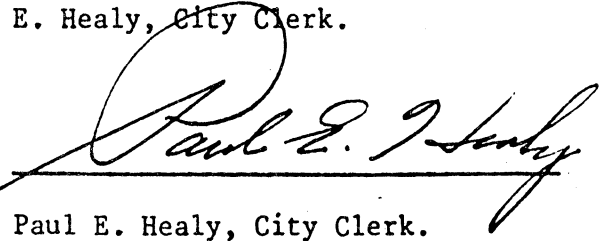
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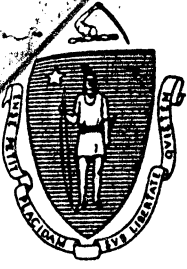
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RECONSIDERATION FILED BY COUNCILLOR WALTER SULLIVAN



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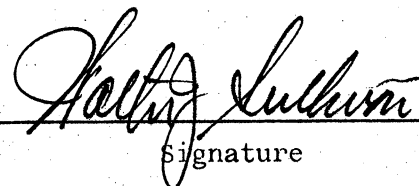
MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR

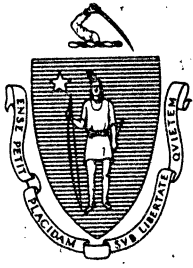
WALTER J. SULLIVAN

MARCH 12, 1984

Date

Councillor Walter Sullivan has notified the City Clerk of his intention to move Reconsideration of the vote of the City Council taken on March 12, 1984, approving the filing of a Home Rule petition entitled "AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS IN THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE", and referring a proposed amendment to the local ordinance regarding same to the Committee on Ordinances.


Signature



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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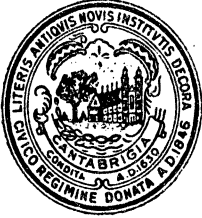
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City of Cambridge

In the Year One Thousand, Nine Hundred Eighty-Four

AN ORDINANCE

In amendment to an ordinance formerly entitled "The General Ordinances of the City of Cambridge" as revised in 1972 and now designated as "The Code of the City of Cambridge".

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Cambridge as follows:

That Chapter Two entitled "Administration", Article XIII entitled "Assessors Department" is hereby amended by striking out section 2-133 entitled "Board of Assessors; Appointments; Term; Vacancies" and substituting in place thereof a new section 2-133 which reads as follows:

ARTICLE XIII. ASSESSORS DEPARTMENT.

Sec. 2-133. Board of Assessors; Appointments; Terms; Vacancies.

(a) The Assessors Department shall be under the charge of the Chairman of the Board of Assessors who shall be known as the Director of Assessment. The Chairman of the Board of Assessors/Director of Assessment shall be appointed by and salary shall be set by the City Manager. The Director shall serve as the Department Head of the Assessors Department and shall be responsible to the City Manager for the operation of the Assessors Department.

(b) There shall be three (3) Assessors, including the Chairman/Director who shall be appointed by the City Manager for terms of three (3) years; such appointments to be made in the month of December, and the terms for each appointment shall commence on the first Monday in January following the appointment.

(c) If a vacancy occurs at any time on the Board of Assessors, including the Chairman/Director the City Manager shall fill such vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(d) The Board of Assessors shall have all the powers and duties and be subject to the limitations of assessor of taxes, as set forth in the laws of the Commonwealth, and shall devote full time to the duties of the office.

City of Cambridge

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 12 1984

*Order by Councilor
David Sullivan*

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	PRESENT
Mr. Daniel J. Clinton	✓			
Mr. Thomas W. Danehy			✓	
Mr. Francis H. Duehay	✓			
Ms. Saundra Graham	✓			
Mr. David E. Sullivan	✓			
Mr. Walter J. Sullivan		✓		
Mr. Alfred Vellucci		✓		
Ms. Alice K. Wolf	✓			
Mayor Russell			✓	

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City of Cambridge

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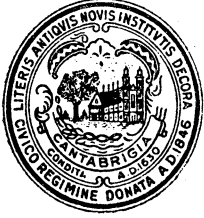
February 27, 1984

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER EIGHT

In City Council

RE: APPROVING THE FILING OF A HOME RULE PETITION ENTITLED "AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS IN THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE"

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	PRESENT
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Mr. Thomas W. Danehy				
Mr. Francis H. Duehay				
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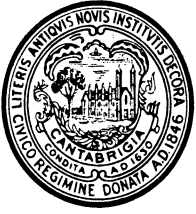
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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

February 27, 1984

To the Honorable, the City Council:

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council approve the attached Home Rule Petition restructuring the Board of Assessors and amend the Local Ordinance regarding the same.

SUMMARY:

Management of the Assessing Department must be strengthened if the City is to meet the challenge of future revaluations and remain in compliance with State law without the problems that accompanied the recently completed revaluation.

The City of Cambridge currently has a three member Board of Assessors which annually selects one of its members to be Chairman. This structure is established pursuant to MGL Chapter 41, Section 24. I propose that this structure be altered by creating the position of Director of Assessment Administration, who would be appointed by the City Manager. The director would serve as department head, fully responsible for the administration of the Assessing Department, as well as function as Chairman of the Board of Assessors. The Board of Assessors would be preserved to handle major policy and abatement decisions.

The City Council must take two steps before the Board of Assessors can be reorganized. First, the Council must file a home rule petition with the State Legislature that would grant Cambridge the legal right to allow the City Manager to appoint the Chairman/Director of Assessing, and second, the Council must amend the City Ordinance regarding the Board of Assessors to implement the proposed change.

BACKGROUND:

The successful completion of the City's property revaluation effort marks the first phase of a new era of property assessment and administration in Cambridge. At the same time, the revaluation process has demonstrated clearly that the existing management structure of the Assessing Department is neither efficient nor effective.

An administrative model which divides ultimate responsibility three equal ways simply has no place in a city of Cambridge's size or in a department which is charged with such an important and difficult role as

the Assessing Department.

ISSUES:

Management of the Assessing Department must be significantly strengthened. The current system of a three person board, equally sharing responsibility and duties and electing one of its members as Chairman is no longer an effective way to manage a department responsible for a community with an assessed value of approximately three billion dollars. Indeed, the idea of instilling elected or appointed boards with administrative responsibilities has been rendered obsolete by the increasing complexity of local government over the last several decades. No other major department in Cambridge (and in most major cities) operates on such a basis; with diffused responsibility, accountability is lost.

Effective, centralized management is necessary, not only to enable the Assessing Department to meet its responsibilities, but also to guide the department through a period of transformation and reorganization.

The central function of the Assessing Department in the future will be revaluation -- the maintenance of values at 100 percent. This function involves the primary activities of data collection, analysis, and electronic data processing. The department's principal activities presently involve manual maintenance of property ownership records and the processing of abatement applications. The necessary reorientation of the Department's work will constitute a near 100 percent transformation of responsibilities. Organizational change is never simple, predictable, or painless. Strong leadership during the process is a must.

The 1987 Revaluation:

The next required revaluation is two years away -- FY87, with an assessment date of January 1, 1986. What may seem like a comfortable period of time in which to gear up and complete a revaluation is, in fact, extremely tight.

First of all, important decisions must be made with respect to the overall "revaluation system" which will, to a large extent, commit the City in one direction for the foreseeable future. Should the City purchase the STA software used in the recently completed revaluation? Are alternative systems preferable? If so, is there sufficient time for a conversion? In terms of hardware, should the revaluation system utilize the City's in-house computer, or is it preferable to have a computer dedicated to Assessing Department use?

Should the Assessing Department develop the capacity to handle commercial revaluation, or should the City anticipate a semi-permanent relationship with a commercial valuation consultant? The same question can be asked of personal property valuation -- though the issue is of lesser importance.

February 27, 1984

While our basic approaches to residential valuation are not likely to change significantly, many improvements are possible. Which are most desirable? Which are feasible within the time frame? Most possible alterations in the residential valuation procedures involve additional data collection -- an expensive and time consuming process.

The residential data base itself needs updating. Many property inspections date back to 1976-1979; these are too old to meet State standards. Developing a systematic updating process is a must. In addition, annual data maintenance functions -- sales, building permits, condo conversion, and subdivisions -- assume increased importance in an environment of regular revaluation. Virtually all need on-site inspections.

This listing of questions, issues, and work requirements related to the next revaluation underscores the immensity of the challenge facing the Assessing Department and its leadership, indicates the dimensions of organizational and staffing changes which must be made, and injects the element of serious time constraints. It is important that the initial actions required to implement changes in the Assessing Department be implemented as soon as possible.

ALTERNATIVE:

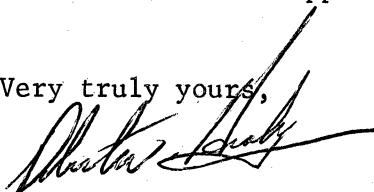
Abolish Board of Assessors. Chapter 41, Section 24, of the General Laws of Massachusetts states that there shall be one, three, five, seven or nine assessors in every city. Historically Cambridge has had a three person Board of Assessors. The most direct option open to the City in any reorganization of the Assessor's Department would be to abolish the Board of Assessors as currently constituted and replace it with one Assessor. While this could be accomplished by merely changing the City Ordinance, I have serious reservations about granting full power to just one individual. In my recommended structure the new director would share authority on matters such as abatements and major policy with the other Board members, but would have the necessary statutory power to effectively control and manage all personnel and financial resources of the Department.

CONCLUSION:

Experience has proven that the existing organization of the City's Assessing Department is inadequate to meet the modern mass appraisal needs of a city as large as Cambridge. The recent revaluation effort was only the beginning. The City must now implement and maintain a mass appraisal system, and do it in time to meet the FY87 State certification deadline.

It is my recommendation that in order to accomplish all of this, the current make-up of the Assessors Department will have to be dramatically altered. The first step in this process will be the appointment of an experienced professional director.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

S-163A

Re: transmitting a proposed home rule petition entitled "AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS IN THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE" and also transmitting a proposed amendment to the local ordinance regarding same.

3/19/84

No Action - Action by Council
3/14/84 Hands -
3/12/1984

E. D. Sullivan order
Approving Filing of
Legislation Adopted
5-2-2

copy sent to Councilor
David Sullivan, Chairman
Ordinance Committee
3/23/84 wh

Proposed Ordinance
Referred to Committee

In City Council,

February 27, 1984

2/27/84

Ordinance Right
by E. W. Sullivan
3/12/84

Reconsideration
Filed by E. W. Sullivan