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ENOUGH ROOM
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2001 JUL 10 P 3:51

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
July 10, 2001

Honorable Members of the
Cambridge City Council
City of Cambridge
795 Mass Avenue
Cambridge MA 02139

Bias on city commission

This is an alert about the lack of objectivity of the Chairman of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission (MCNCDC), John Moos. I wrote to the City Manager about this problem earlier on August 16, 2000.

On Monday July 2, 2001 a hearing was held by the MCNCDC at the Senior Citizen Center. Harvard's proposed Knafel Center was discussed at length. 13 employees of Harvard were present; four members of the community.

One issue discussed for about 15 minutes was resistance to graffiti of the terra cotta brick. When Chairman Moos asked for questions from members of the community, I asked if they considered the use of scratch resistant glass as used on the New York City Subway system. The discussion on graffiti continued for another five minutes.

The architect for Harvard asserted that the color of the brick was "sympathetic" to the surrounding buildings; that the brick color projected warmth. When Chairman Moos solicited public input, I suggested that the color of the brick was not a mediation between the red brick and clapboard houses in the neighborhood; but more like Putrid Pink and offensive to both. Chairman Moos said, "That was not a question."

I replied, "I can make it into a question. But I asked many questions at previous hearings and they never get answered. What's the difference?"

Chairman Moos said, "Then you shouldn't ask any questions."

Former Harvard chief PR-spin-doctor, Paul Grogan used to speak in terms of Harvard's hurt feelings. He had concern for the feelings of a multinational corporation with \$19 billion in assets but no concern for vulnerable citizens in Cambridge. Now we hear from Harvard's architect and Commission Chairman John Moos who attribute feelings to bricks and colors as Grogan did to corporations. Like Grogan, Moos has no concern for the destruction of another Cambridge residential neighborhood.

Discussing a proposed bus shelter in front of Knafel South, Chairman Moos asked for questions. I noted that a bus shelter was supposed to protect people from the elements; that the design left a gap where wind and rain could enter the shelter; that it differed from other shelters in so far as it has two open sides not protecting much at all; that it was an eye sore and was not needed;

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that it created a barrier on the sidewalk where there has been none for many years.

The petitioner, HPRE, stated that the bus shelter should be maintained by the City. Chairman Moos offered the services of the City to maintain this proposed shelter. There was minimal concerns about incurring this expense of taxpayer funds.

Later brick sidewalks were discussed by a Harvard employee. When Moos asked for comments by members of the public, I asked, "Has Harvard considered moving the Garage on Broadway and Felton Street, and Gund Hall to Allston? Both are ugly buildings. Has Harvard or any member of the Commission considered the impact of brick sidewalks on persons who need wheelchairs and who are sight impaired? Have they considered the hazard to such persons who have difficulty navigating sidewalks with removed bricks?"

I reported, "I've seen young women with their infants pushing their strollers in the street. When I asked why they walked in the street they explained that the brick sidewalks were difficult to navigate."

I asked, "Has the petitioner made any arrangements for allowing non Harvard affiliates to view the mock up of the proposed building without violating Harvard's posted signs which state emphatically 'No Trespassing?'" On previous occasions when I asked about this criminal offense for those who are not Harvard affiliates, that question was not answered either. That was after the petitioner made repeated comments that the proposed Knafel Center was friendly to the neighborhood, and it was inviting to members of the community, and actually designed for the benefit of the community. I asked then if the "No Trespassing" signs were not applicable to the friendly building; not applicable to persons who only enter upon Harvard property a little bit. The petitioner responded that they did not know the answer.

Harvard holds hearings on their private, posted for No Trespassing, property where some members of the community are not permitted to attend. They have a mock-up of the Knafel project on Harvard's private posted property. The Commission Chairman did not think this a hindrance to making information available to the community.

The only question responded to on July 2, 2001 was that the brick sidewalk was placed into 4 inches of cement which is the proper way to make brick sidewalks; that the other brick sidewalks in Cambridge are not done properly.

This is the second time that Chairman Moos discouraged my comments and questions. He was arbitrary in his standards of whether it was comments or questions that he sought. Sometimes he asked for one; sometimes he asked for both.

He was as usual obsequious toward Harvard and suggested that neighbors needed to be reasonable. He did not suggest that it was unreasonable to discuss for 20 minutes the unlikelihood of graffiti in that neighborhood as the petitioner admitted. Nor did he think it unreasonable to spend 15 minutes discussing the three positions

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of the shades on the windows. Nor did he think it unreasonable for Harvard to continue their destruction of another residential neighborhood in Cambridge.

I requested that the Chairman ask speakers to identify themselves. But this was not done. There was no sound recording made of the hearing, nor any name signs for members of the Commission. This hearing was conducted as if everyone knew one another; that it was unnecessary to have any one held accountable for what they said. This is a recurring sloppy pattern of how business is conducted in the City.

It seems almost as if Chairman Moos' standard for being reasonable is the wealth of the speaker. A \$19 billion dollar endowment makes whatever the petitioner says reasonable? Critics at Moos-chaired hearings are always unreasonable, disruptive or uncivil?

I suggest that Chairman Moos be reevaluated for his consistent bias favoring Harvard and it's hoard. He appears to be strongly overtly biased in favor of Harvard and its program of destruction of the demography of the City of Cambridge; tolerant of Harvard's repeated deceptions before city commissions; tolerant of Harvard's unfair practices within the City by their for profit division, HPRE.

Moos discouraged citizen participation and encouraged inane discussion of cosmetic building details, ignoring the detrimental effect on the neighborhood; and ignoring especially deceptive statements made regularly by the petitioner during eight meetings during 2000.

The City should deny this petition and its proposed destruction of trees, parking places and the residential nature of this area. Chairman Moos should be replaced and the hearings conducted by him on the Knafel Center be declared void and ordered to be reheard.

Roy Bercaw

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Communication #9

A communication was received
from Roy Bercaw, Editor, Enough
Room, regarding the Mid-
Cambridge Neighborhood
Conservation District Commission.

In City Council July 30, 2001

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