

Letter to City Council from R Bercaw January 24, 2002

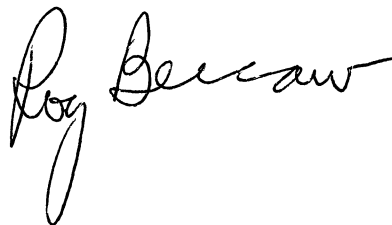
Many organizations scout areas for their annual meetings. The competition is fierce. The Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce encourage such meetings to be held in this area. It benefits the cab business. But if public transportation is not handicapped accessible these organizations go elsewhere.

It is reprehensible that these drivers see disabled persons as an inconvenience; they bring business, they do not take business away. It is disgraceful that some persons, including a City Councilor suggest delaying adding handicapped accessible cabs.

If Cambridge is unable to extend to disabled persons the same rights and privileges enjoyed by others, they may violate the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Disability based discrimination is as illegal as unlawful bias due to race, religion, and sexual preference. Advocates of other vulnerable group's civil rights do not appear to testify on behalf of disabled persons; who remain off of the radar screen of the media, the government, the police and civilians.

Activists for other vulnerable groups argue that they want to extend rights to all citizens. The Cambridge City Council appropriates money to eliminate hate, racism, bias against gays and lesbians, and women. Here is a matter of unlawful discrimination by a licensed public accommodation toward persons with disabilities. Making taxis accessible is not only right, but a matter of law. Any suggestion to delay this is a clear violation of City, state and US laws.

Will the City Council remain in the Middle Ages in their policy toward persons with disabilities? Or will they lead the way for other local, state, and US government agencies by insisting that all taxis be accessible to all citizens of this city? That is what current law requires.



13

ENOUGH ROOM
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JAN 24 P 3: 55
CITY CLERK
January 24, 2002

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

Re: ADA compliant taxis

It is a political, legal and moral outrage that in 2002 the Cambridge City Council would consider delaying the issuance of seven taxi medallions that would increase the number to 14 of 255 wheelchair accessible taxis in Cambridge. The Americans with Disabilities Act became law in 1990. Taxis are a public accommodation under the ADA, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151 B, and also the Massachusetts Constitution Amendment CXIV. City ordinances make it a violation to deny a citizen equal access to public accommodations within the City.

Every day that a taxi in Cambridge is not wheelchair accessible, the City and the taxis stand in open defiance of City, state and US laws. The idea that this decision by the Cambridge License Commission to add seven wheelchair accessible taxis should be delayed one minute is scandalous.

In December 2001 the Cambridge School Committee remarkably voted to make education available to its citizens regardless of economic status. Councilor Toomey stated at that meeting that those who opposed this extension of education opportunity wanting to delay it, were the same people who opposed allowing former black slaves equal access to opportunities of this country 100 years ago.

Would the Council consider denying equal access to rights and privileges guaranteed by the 1964 Civil Rights Act in the year 1976? That is 12 years after that law was effective. It is now 12 years since the ADA became law.

Today the City Council in the country's allegedly most liberal city considers delaying enabling wheelchair dependent citizens the right and privilege to take a taxi in order to shop, to run errands, to see a movie, to visit friends, or even to attend the City Council meeting.

City Councilors took an oath on January 7, 2002, 17 days ago, to support and uphold the Massachusetts Constitution and the US Constitution. The City cannot by law vote to delay this decision and maintain their oath to uphold the Constitution. The Council should reassert their allegiance to the Constitution, instead of flaunting their allegiance to other nations by displaying foreign flags in the Council Chambers.

The specious argument by taxi drivers is that wheelchair passengers are "inconvenient;" that they delay drivers from earning money.

S-27

Consent Communication#13

A communication was received from Roy Bercaw, regarding the issuance of seven taxi medallions for wheelchair accessible vehicles.

In City Council January 28, 2002

PLACED ON FILE