

Harvard Square Business Association

18 BRATTLE STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

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SALLY ALCORN

September 10, 1991

The Cambridge City Council
c/o Mr. Joseph Connarton
Cambridge City Clerk
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Joe,

The Harvard Square Business Association has been increasingly concerned about the lack of enforcement of the current Cambridge Street Performers Ordinance. In order to address these concerns on behalf of the members of our business community, our Board of Directors voted last Friday to draft the following Position Paper calling for suitable amendments to the existing ordinance:

"Although street performances can add considerably to the life of Harvard Square, the extent to which certain musicians (especially drummers) dominate the air waves has become intolerable for staff in key locations in the Square to conduct simple business transactions. The parameters of the current ordinance require meter readings from 50 feet and allow a maximum of 80 decibels at that distance. To reduce said readings to 60 decibels from 25 feet seems reasonable to all who have had to suffer 75+ decibels of continuous noise within the confines of adjacent stores and restaurants from repetitious outdoor gigs nearby.

"The current ordinance has been the subject of cooperative discussion for the past four monthly forums conducted by the Arts Council and attended by representatives from the Arts Council, the License Commission, the Police Department, the Street Performers Guild, and the Harvard Square Business Association. Together, we have tried to effect a proactive approach to specific problems and have accomplished as much as possible within the limitations of the current ordinance.

"In Cambridge, the lack of equipment (i.e., sound meters) and the limited availability of authorized personnel to take regular readings (especially at night and on the weekends, when street performances tend to crank up) have frustrated all of us.

-more-

Telephone: (617) 491-3434

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CAMBRIDGE MA

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The Harvard Coop

"The general frustration is evident. Even musicians complain to the Arts Council that they are drowned out by their competitors; store owners are exasperated by constant disruption of their peace and blocking access to their stores during normal business hours (9-6); and residents complain that their sleep and quiet evenings are disturbed.

"Furthermore, the existing ordinance has made it possible to issue permits to twice as many street performers -- 410 permits so far this year, compared to 210 permits last year, under a mandate that requires each performer in a group to display his or her own permit while playing. Provision was made in the ordinance to double the number of permits to performers, but no penalties or fines are imposed on those that refuse to comply with the basic guidelines of the ordinance in its present form.

"In presenting our views on this complicated subject, the Harvard Square Business Association does not wish to challenge the First Amendment rights of others to express themselves, but to try to achieve greater harmony in our shared environment. Thank you for your cooperation with the process of amending the Street Performers Ordinance to meet common standards necessary to conduct our mutual livelihoods here in Harvard Square.

Sincerely yours,



Sally Alcorn
Executive Director

cc City Manager Robert Healy
HSBA President Tod Beaty

Consent comm. # 28

0-36

Comm. from Sally Alcorn, Executive Director, Harvard Square Business Association, regarding the lack of enforcement of the Cambridge Street Enforcement Ordinance.

In City Council,

Sept. 16, 1991

Referred to the
City Manager &
Ordinance Committee
Copy sent to City Mgr 9/18/91
Copy sent to Ord. Comm 9/18/91