



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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

OFFICE OF
THE CITY CLERK

May 31, 1985

Robert W. Healy, City Manager
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Sir:

This office has had several inquiries regarding the lodging house at the premises numbered 151-153 Auburn Street and the action taken by the City Council at its meeting of May 6, 1985.

A review of the minutes of the meeting of May 6, 1985 reveals that a report was requested in two weeks from the City Manager after conference with all department heads concerned.

Councillor Graham indicated that a report should include what action could be taken by way of eminent domain purchase by a Community Corporation or possibly the Cambridge Housing Authority.

Councillor Clinton requested that the City Manager receive a copy of the original letter received from the Upper Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association, a copy of which is enclosed.

Councillor Duehay stated that the matter must be pursued and that the possibility of the Community Corporation or the Housing Authority acquiring this property be pursued and requested a meeting be held together with the parties concerned to accomplish this purpose.

I hope that this information will be helpful in resolving this matter.

Very truly yours,

Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.

PEH/dl

Enc. (1)

#17

To: Members of the City Council

From: The Upper Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association

Re: ACTION ON ROOMING HOUSE AT 151-153 AUBURN STREET

Date: May 6, 1985

We citizens of the city of Cambridge can hardly be proud of our ability to provide housing to a variety of income levels and cultural backgrounds, when we allow living conditions such as those in the rooming house at 151-153 Auburn Street.

We neighbors of the rooming house are convinced that it is no longer a time for a wait and see attitude, or a second chance for the owner, whoever he or she may currently or subsequently be. The house changes hands far too rapidly for anyone to believe that a long term effort on the part of private landlords will remedy the terrible conditions in that rooming house.

It is time for the city to seek other means for improving the conditions there.

The city need not take the word of the neighbors. We request that the first action the city of Cambridge take be to investigate the rooming house's records, inspect the premises and prepare a report that goes beyond the standard bureaucratic responses, and instead attempts to answer a simple question: "Would I wish myself or my friends to live in a house in such condition?"

The second action we wish the city of Cambridge to take is put responsibility for the operation of this rooming house in the hands of a responsible organization, one that has a record for providing decent housing for low income families and individuals. We suggest the Cambridge Housing Authority as a possible candidate.

HISTORY

The rooming house at 151-153 Auburn Street, in Cambridge, Massachusetts has a lengthy record of violations and disturbances in the neighborhood, over many years. City records bear out this fact.

Two years ago, the neighbors on Auburn Street brought their concerns to the attention of the city council in the presence of Robert Chambers, the owner at that time. The council

referred the matter to the committee on housing; that committee heard the grievances of the neighbors and responses from Robert Chambers indicating that he would run the boarding house in accordance with the laws, and it recommended no action, but merely encouraged the neighbors to depend on the promises of the owner.

CURRENT STATUS

Robert Chambers sold the rooming house shortly thereafter to Robert Vestucci, who is the current owner. Mr. Vestucci is currently operating the rooming house in default, without a license due to code violations; and it is operating without a live-in manager. Over the last year, the rooming house has continued to be a disturbance to the neighborhood, consistently keeping neighbors awake on weekend nights and frequent weekday nights with noisy comings and goings all night long, including visits by the police.

The rooming house continues to provide unacceptable accommodations: it has only two bathrooms for 13 units; we have seen no evidence that the unsafe wiring we examined earlier has been significantly improved to make the house safe from fire; there is no live-in manager to maintain peace and quiet for the roomers as well as neighborhood.

17.

S-356

Comm. from the Upper Cambridgeport Neighborhood Assoc. Re: action on the rooming house at 151-153 Auburn Street.

In City Council,

May 6, 1985

5/6/1985

Placed on File

- See Orders Adopted -

Beverly Laine