CCM-101

City of Cambridge

R-24.

IN CITY COUNCIL

February 12, 2001

COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR BRAUDE
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
COUNCILLOR DECKER
MAYOR GALLUCCIO
VICE MAYOR MAHER
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record extending its congratulations to the Cambridge License Commission on the first publication of its newsletter entitled "The Dispatch;" and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to the License Commission on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council February 12, 2001.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

R-24

C. Sullivan
all

Resolved Congrats to the Camb License Comm on the first publication of its Newsletter "The Dispatch".

VVG

MS Compost

The Dispatch

Newsletter of the Cambridge License Commission and the Cambridge Consumers' Council
February 2001

From the Cambridge License Commission

The Cambridge License Commission issues licenses and enforces rules, regulations, local ordinances and state laws relating to the sale of alcoholic beverages, restaurants, inn-holders, lodging houses and dormitories, garages and gasoline storage permit holders, shops and sales, taxicabs and taxicab drivers, open air parking lots, entertainment, fortune tellers, raffles and bazaars, festivals, used car dealers, peddlers, auctioneers, jitney and livery/limousine licenses.

The Board consists of Chairman Benjamin Barnes, Fire Chief Gerald Reardon and Retired Police Captain Henry Breen.

The License Commission is also responsible for investigation of license-related complaints and regulation of the city's noise ordinance. While all complaints must be filed in writing, you can call **617-349-6149** to report follow-up information on noise and licensing complaints.

Our Hackney Division, which oversees the Cambridge taxicab industry, can be reached at **617-349-6146.**

Visit our web page, **www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~License/**, to learn procedures for obtaining licenses issued by this department, and for useful links to pages about licenses issued by other city and state agencies.

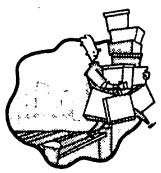
All upcoming public hearings are posted on the City's web page. Detailed agendas for all hearings can be found at: **www2.ci.cambridge.ma.us/Notices/.**

Hearing-related correspondence to the Commissioners should be directed to Executive Officer Richard Scali, **831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139.**

Contact the Cambridge License Commission for application forms, hearing deadlines, etc. Our staff can be reached Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at **617-349-6140** or **617-349-6141** (voicemail available). Further, you can call our office for a complaint form, or download one from our web page, **www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~License/complaintlic.pdf.**

Please forward questions, comments or complaints to us at **license@ci.cambridge.ma.us.**

From the Cambridge Consumers' Council



The Cambridge Consumers' Council works in cooperation with the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office. The Consumers' Council, mediates individual consumer disputes with businesses in an effort to eliminate the need for either party to pursue formal legal action. The Consumers' Council also provides educational information to consumers, and monitors trends in the marketplace, making suggestions for new and amended legislation to better protect consumers.

Consumers typically contact the Consumers' Council when they experience:

- Problems with new or used car sales;
- Difficulties with home improvement or repair contracts;
- Landlord/tenant conflicts;
- Trouble with credit collection;
- Issues with returns, cancellations and defective products; and
- Doubts about mail order or door-to-door sales practices.

After they have attempted to resolve the dispute on their own, consumers seeking mediation services should contact our office or visit our web site for a complaint form. Consumers should also contact the office or visit our web site with questions about how to write a letter to a business or landlord, or to request pamphlets on a variety of consumer issues.

Visit our interactive web site, **www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~Consumer/**, or call the office at **617-349-6150.**

Cambridge License Commission Hearings

Tuesday, February 13, 2001

6:00 p.m. General Hearing
Michael J. Lombardi Municipal Bldg.
831 Massachusetts Avenue,
Basement Conference Room

Agenda Includes: North Point Café, Inc., d/b/a Lingo, Justin M. Kopec, Manager, holder of an All Alcoholic Beverages as a Restaurant license at One Education Street, to amend its Entertainment license to include Karaoke, Dancing by Patrons, Juke Box, and Readings of Poetry, in addition to Live Music, two televisions and background music already licensed.

Tuesday, February 27, 2001

6:00 p.m. General Hearing
Michael J. Lombardi Municipal Bldg.
831 Massachusetts Avenue,
Basement Conference Room

Agenda Includes: Sati Ali, d/b/a First Bytes Restaurant, Sati Ali, Manager, for a Common Victualer license at 51 First Street, from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m., seven days a week.

Did You Know?

You can find more information about the Consumers' Council at **www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~Consumer/** and more information about the License Commission at **www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~License/** !

Be a Savvy Internet Shopper

Consumers are turning to the Internet for shopping or purchasing services more frequently. Airplane tickets, hotel reservations, books, auction items, flowers, fabric, pharmaceutical products and much more are available at the click of a mouse and the entry of a credit card number. Yet, as with all consumer transactions, you need to be a smart and cautious shopper. Common sense must prevail.

The Consumers' Council has received complaints about Internet purchases that have caused frustration for the consumer, as well as complaints about outright scams perpetrated via the Web. For more information and advice, read "*Be a Savvy Internet Shopper*," an article posted on the Consumers' Council Web page,

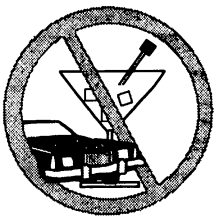
www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~Consumer/savvyshopper.html.

Cambridge 2001

MADD And The License Commission Team Up Against Underage Drinking

The Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) *Youth In Action* students, and the Cambridge License Commission, recently teamed up to complete a *Shoulder Tap Survey* of area package stores. This was a new project for both MADD and the License Commission.

A *Shoulder Tap Survey* is conducted as a way to ascertain information about social availability of alcohol to minors. Minors (under age 21) working for the project approach individuals over age 21 on their way into a package store, and ask if they would be willing to purchase alcohol for them. The young person then gives the adult a magnet corresponding to their response. If the adult refused to purchase alcohol, their magnet will thank them for their compliance. However, adults who agreed to make the purchase will receive a magnet that explains the chance of being cited and possible penalties.



MADD's *Youth In Action* team organizes the *Shoulder Tap Survey* and other community- based prevention projects as a way to reduce social and retail availability of alcohol to minors. The information gathered by their projects is disseminated to the public to heighten awareness and increase enforcement of underage drinking laws. *Youth In Action* students work with law enforcement and licensing agencies, such as the Cambridge License Commission, to complete their projects.

MADD and the Cambridge License Commission are encouraged by the results of both this project and other projects they have teamed up to complete. Proactive cooperation is key to finding the right solutions to reducing underage drinking and saving lives.

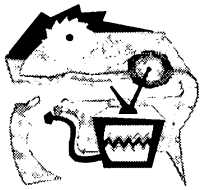
Home Improvement Repairs

Cambridge is a city filled with homeowners tackling remodeling repair projects on their property. Most home improvement contractors are flooded with customers seeking their services. This triggers dilemmas for both sides. A homeowner who wants a small job completed must struggle to find an available contractor. Some contractors, having trouble turning away business, are overextended and are failing to keep their unrealistic promises of project completion dates. Occasionally, the Council is called upon to mediate such disputes. We also assist consumers who are faced with shoddy work, jobs abandoned by the contractor and other serious issues.

Massachusetts has a strong ***Home Improvement Contractor Law*** that can help consumers greatly when such a dispute arises. However, the first step is to make sure your contractor is **registered** with the state as a home improvement contractor. The contractor should be able to show you his registration card. It is also wise to verify the contractor's **registration status** with the Massachusetts Board of Building Regulations and Standards, the agency that oversees the program, at **617-727-3200, ext. 605.**

The *Home Improvement Contractor Law* specifies that the consumer should be required to pay no more than one third of the contract price up-front. The law further details what information the contract must include. In addition, it creates a remedy for consumers who are unable to collect from a contractor, such as one who abandons the job or goes bankrupt before completing the job. There is a ***Guaranty Fund*** that may be tapped to reimburse consumers in such circumstances, ***but only if they hired a registered contractor!*** The Consumers' Council has more information about this law and can send you an informative pamphlet. You may also choose to file a consumer complaint with the Council. Call **617-349-6150** to discuss the *Home Improvement Contractor Law* and your situation.

Cable TV Complaints And Concerns



MediaOne Cable TV or *MediaOne Internet Express* complaints and concerns are coordinated for the City by the Consumers' Council, so please consider contacting this office instead of the City's Cable TV Office or the Mayor's Office.

AT&T has taken over the *MediaOne Cable TV* company; thus, the City of Cambridge now has a license agreement with *MediaOne of Massachusetts, Inc.*, offering services as *AT&T Broadband.* On January 1, 2001, this license was renewed for ten years. Further, with the goal of fostering a competitive climate for Cambridge cable customers, the city is in the process of negotiating a cable franchise agreement with *RCN.* Once the agreement is signed, a lengthy construction period will commence; therefore, do not expect competing cable companies for a couple of years.

The Consumers' Council will continue to mediate consumer complaints and disputes regarding cable TV services from *AT&T Broadband*, and will also assist the City Manager as he oversees these franchise agreements to make sure Cambridge customers have both quality and competitive cable TV and Internet Broadband services.

Landlord/Tenant Issues

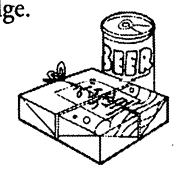
Apartment renters' issues are a frequent concern of consumers contacting the Consumers' Council, dominating the majority of inquiries that come to this office via the Web Page Inquiry Form. Telephone calls and written complaints often focus on this topic as well. Cambridge is facing a continuing surge in the value of residential property and is also experiencing a serious housing availability problem for renters in search of housing, and buyers seeking to purchase a residence in our city. Thus, competition is fierce and prices are skyrocketing.

As a result, we are often asked *'Is there any percentage limit on how much my landlord can raise my rent?'* Our negative response disappoints those who ask this question. Rent Control has been gone for several years, and landlords are no longer limited by anything other than what the marketplace withstands. Significant yearly increases have become common. The Council frequently hears from long-term residents with children feeling extremely desperate about the rent increase notice or the tenancy termination notice they have just received. Elderly tenants with no hope of paying a major rent increase are also concerned. The Council informs the consumer/tenant of the regulations requiring written notice of any rent increase, one full month in advance, and other relevant information about these matters.

Security Deposit issues are also a major topic of contention with consumers contacting the Council. Massachusetts General Laws c.186, sec.15B details the requirements for landlords, and, explains the circumstances in which any or all of that deposit may be kept, rather than returned at the end of the tenancy. Call **617-349-6150** for more information on landlord/tenant issues, or visit the web site of the Office of Consumer Affairs at **www.state.ma.us/consumer/Info/lndldtnt.htm.**

Cambridge License Commission Investigations

This past summer, the License Commission continued its underage drinking investigations of package goods stores and alcohol restaurants. The Commission hired a 20-year-old intern to work with our Chief Licensing Investigator and Hackney Police Officer to determine whether underage individuals were being asked for proof of age in Cambridge.



Using a computer-generated random listing of licensed establishments, the intern went to 20 restaurants and 12 package goods stores in Cambridge, asking to be served a beer or to purchase a six-pack of beer. At 10 out of the 12 package stores, the underage intern was able to purchase a six-pack. In five out of the 20 restaurants, the intern was able to buy a beer. The Commission heard each disciplinary case, giving warnings to first time offenders, and requiring the licensee to become an active member of the Cambridge Licensee Advisory Board (CLAB). The Licensee must then report back to the Commission on Underage-Drinking Prevention Programs and Training. Second time offenders received a one-day suspension, while the only third-time offender received a 5-day suspension.

Because these results are so discouraging, the License Commission has joined forces with MADD to conduct underage investigations in Cambridge. This collaboration will allow the Commission to hire high school and college age MADD members to conduct a range of investigations.

All of these investigations will be conducted under the direct supervision of the License Commission's Chief Licensing Investigator and our Hackney Police Officer, and with permission of the parents or guardians of each underage volunteer.

This collaboration could lead to further programs investigating MIT, Harvard and Lesley University student parties. The goals of all investigations are to prevent minors from purchasing alcohol, and to improve the quality of life for all Cambridge residents.

Unique Assistance Program For Cambridge Seniors

The *Carrier Alert Program* is an effort to reach out to homebound Cambridge seniors, offering some protection for them within their own homes. The Cambridge Post Office and the Cambridge Council on Aging are the main partners responsible for this program. The goal is to find Cambridge seniors willing to voluntarily disclose to their letter carriers that they may be in poor health and homebound. Once residents provide this information, they will be enrolled in the program and their carrier will be observant of possible build-up of the previously-delivered mail in their mailboxes. If this occurs, the Council on Aging is notified and follows the instructions provided by the senior.

This program is not a substitute for the *Lifeline Program*, which provides the vulnerable person with a physical contact device at all times; instead, it offers another level of potential assistance. The Council on Aging has a special voicemail number for anyone seeking information or an application to this program, **617-349-6055.** Recently a new outreach effort was conducted to remind seniors to sign-up for this program. The Consumers' Council works closely with the Postal Service and the Council on Aging to make this program a success.

Revised *CAR SMART* Available To Consumers

The Massachusetts Consumers' Coalition, chaired by Paul J. Schlaver, is a statewide consumer organization, which has just published the third edition of the comprehensive *CAR SMART* booklet. This booklet addresses almost everything that a consumer needs to know to buy, lease, or repair a vehicle, and provides references to Massachusetts laws and regulations, including those promulgated by the Registry of Motor Vehicles. The 82-page *CAR SMART* is free, and available to the general public upon request. You can view the booklet on the Coalition's web site, **www.massconsumers.org/carsmart**, or you can obtain a copy from the Cambridge Consumers' Council by visiting **831 Massachusetts Ave.**, by calling 617-349-6150, or by emailing **consumer@ci.cambridge.ma.us.**

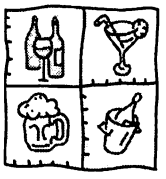
License Commission Joins CPC and CLAB To Train Alcohol Servers

Early last year, the Cambridge Prevention Coalition (CPC) received a grant from the Commonwealth to develop an environmental substance abuse prevention strategy to reduce underage drinking in Cambridge.

The CPC, in collaboration with the Cambridge License Commission and the Cambridge Licensee Advisory Board (CLAB), designed and implemented the Cambridge-based *Responsible Server Training Program.* A public health model and prevention theory were incorporated into the curriculum, which was designed using proven training methods. A four-hour server intervention training, known as L.E.A.R.N. (Licensees Education and Regulatory Network), was finalized in June 2000.

The objectives of L.E.A.R.N. training are to reduce underage drinking in Cambridge, to increase people's knowledge and skills about practicing responsible alcohol sales and service, to ensure that expectations, liabilities and legal responsibilities are communicated to all licensees and their employees, and to create a unified environment of responsible hospitality and alcohol sales throughout Cambridge.

The first training sessions were for employees of Harvard Square establishments, with some of the sessions bringing neighboring establishments together to train their crews simultaneously. The primary trainers, Frank Connelly and John McKeon, have over forty years of combined experience in the food and beverage industry. They report that the owners and managers have been accommodating and supportive of the training. The Radisson Hotel, formerly Howard Johnson's, has generously donated space for a number of training sessions, and The Charles Hotel donated much-needed parking. Employees and managers who have completed the program report near-unanimous satisfaction with the quality of the training. Initial evaluation results indicate that the training has increased participants' knowledge and skills. The training will also be evaluated to demonstrate and measure its effectiveness.



While this program was being implemented, the CPC created similar training for non-pouring establishments. The initial sessions for package good stores were held in November 2000 and January 2001. Everyone involved in the project remains committed to continuing with it and to the collaborations that have evolved. Regular updates are given to both the License Commission and to CLAB. If you want to schedule training, or are interested in working as a trainer in this program, please contact Frank Connelly at 617-349-6334 or at **fconnelly@ci.cambridge.ma.us.**

Benjamin Barnes, Chair, License Commission **Paul J. Schlaver, Executive Director, Consumers' Council**
THANK YOU! Contributors: Frank Connelly, Amy Fradette, Richard Scali, Paul J. Schlaver, and Ellen Fitzgerald Watson
Editor and Designer: Elana H. Margolis

The Dispatch
Cambridge License Commission
Cambridge Consumers' Council
831 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!
Public Forum

Prepare yourself to buy, lease, or repair a car before the upcoming PRESIDENTS' WEEKEND SALE MADNESS!!!

Thursday,
February 15, 2001
Senior Center
806 Massachusetts Avenue
6:30 p.m.

Receive a free copy of the newly revised CAR SMART BOOKLET!

Councilor Michael Sullivan

CCM-101

City of Cambridge

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IN CITY COUNCIL

February 12, 2001

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257 R

Resolution #24

Congratulations to the Cambridge License Commission on the first publication of its newsletter entitled "The Dispatch."

Councillor Sullivan and entire membership

In City Council February 12, 2001

ORDER ADOPTED