



City of Cambridge

Consent Communication #14

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 17, 1994

COUNCILLOR DUEHAY

ORDERED: That this communication is referred to the City Manager for referral and consultation with the Conservation Commission and communication was the Metropolitan District Commission and a report back to the City Council.

In City Council October 17, 1994.

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

14
October 10, 1994

Rita Sabina Mandosa

RECEIVED BY
STATE OF MASS. CLERK
1994 OCT 12 PM 1:09
ATTORNEY AT LAW
221 MT. AUBURN STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138
CAMBRIDGE, MA.

(617) 354-2543

Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, Ma. 02139

and

Cambridge Conservation Commission

and

Governor William Weld, State House

RE: OVERGROWN WEEDS UP TO 30 FEET HIGH

BWTN MONATERY AND CAMBRIDGE BOAT HOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

Dear City Council and Conservation Members:

For the last 2 years I have repeatedly called the MDC about its failure to cut down the weeds along the River, along where I reside. I have been a Cambridge resident for 30 years and am very familiar with the banks of the River, and can assure you that they have always been clear cut along the Cambridge side until last year. I have been told that the Camb. Conservation Commission served a cease and desist order upon the MDC, thereby halting this practice. This is no doubt the result of a small very vocal, well-intentioned, but misinformed group. I hope herein to raise your awareness as to the serious harm you are bringing about by this new policy and to prevail upon you to rethink and correct it. My concerns fall into 4 categories: Concern for the Sycamore; Concern for Public Safety; Issues of birds and water fowl; and Public enjoyment of public space. Each of these are addressed in turn below.

(1) THE SYCAMORE TREES: One of the treasures of massachusetts is the line of sycamore trees along the Cambridge side of the Charles between the Wepld boathouse and the CAMbridge Boathouse. We hold these in trust for future generations. I was part of the successful protests 20+

years ago which blocked expansion of the roadway, requiring sacrifice of these trees. Consequently I have a special affection for them. It is obvious to me that the recent damage to the sycamores is not unrelated to the loss of a clearing wind from the river due to the failure to cut back the weeds. The horrible and ugly wall of weeds that has been allowed to grow up over the last two years has effectively cut off all fresh air from the river which has always helped to clear the serious pollution levels from that heavily trafficked roadway running within inches of the trees. The effect now is of a dangerously polluted tunnel in which these beautiful trees are forced to try to survive. The strain of this new policy on the trees is strikingly clear. The trees have been diagnosed with a fungus, however I believe we are causing more serious, and irreparable harm by robbing them of fresh air. I urge you to consider these factors immediately before we lose these wonderful sycamores. Are we to be the generation that permitted such unnecessary loss?

(2) PUBLIC SAFETY: AS one who lives along the river, I bemoan the loss of evening strolls along the river due to the failure to cut back the weeds. What lurks in these thick walls of overgrown weeds up to 30 feet high in places is potential robbers and rapists. Only the foolhardy would dare to venture along there at night now. There are no lights, but before one had the beauty of the reflected moonlight from the river. Modern urban life is stressful enough without denying the citizens the simple pleasure of an evening stroll near one's home. The danger to the public by this newly created wall of weeds is foreseeable, and I hereby give the city and the commonwealth notice of the risks here. Should someone be harmed as a result of the city's and the state's failure to take corrective action liability would follow. I for one would be a willing witness at a trial on these issues.

(3) BIRDS AND WATER FOWL: The MDC informed me that an assertion was made by the Conservation Commission that birds and water fowl lived in these weeds and needed to be protected. This is absolutely untrue!!

The birds all live in the numerous surrounding trees, and no water fowl have ever lived on the Cambridge side of the river along this stretch. The Boston side used to have water fowl there, because the river bank there, unlike the Cambridge side, was far removed from the pedestrian traffic and the disturbances that creates for nesting pairs. The only things living in the newly created weeds are rats. The Cambridge river bank is too inhospitable for water fowl, in that the foot, skate, bike, and auto traffic is far too close. How can the Commission make such bold and false assertion?? I am a supporter of birds etc., and have belonged to the mass. audobon society for years, so that I hope my statements on this issue have credibility. The fact is that there are no birds or water fowl which need protection. It may be that someone is attempting to attract these birds to the river bank, but to do so would wrong them, as the chance of their survival on the Cambridge side in this stretch is poor.

(4) PUBLIC ENJOYMENT: Why is it that the only portion of the Cambridge river bank that has been walled off by 30 foot weeds, all over these past 2 years, is the stretch between the Weld boathouse and the Cambridge boathouse? Is one individual responsible for this discriminatory action?

I live along here yet I am cut off from my enjoyment of the river, because I no longer see it, or feel its cooling breeze. I see mothers come and sit along the river bank with their children, but have no open view, but only ugly thick brush and stifling air. Over and over the conversation is the same; i.e. why have they not cut back the weeds for 2 years? Lost to us is the pleasure of watching the scullers, or simply meditating on the sparkle and flow of the river. I read a study that concluded

that the incidents of violence in urban areas is inversely proportional to the amount of visible water. I hope the city in its wisdom will restore to the people the enjoyable and soothing access to the river it had up until last year.

Thank you for your consideration of the issues I raise herein. I ask that you respond in writing with you decision, which I hope considers the wellbeings of ~~prees~~ trees, birds, and humans together.

Rita I. Mardon

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Consent Comm. #14

§-417

Comm. from Rita Mandosa, 221 Mt. Auburn
Street, regarding the overgrown weeds
along the Charles River.

In City Council,

October 17, 1994

*Referred to the
City Manager
on motion of
Councillor
Duchay*

*Copy sent to City Mgr.
10/19/94 @W*