

12 Surrey Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
July 29, 1985

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Vice Mayor Francis Duehay and
the Cambridge City Council
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Vice Mayor Duehay:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I sent to Chief of Police Paolillo which I would like to bring to your attention. In addition to the main issue of the letter, namely, the bicycle menace, I have some harsh words to say about the Cambridge City Council.

I do not feel that the Cambridge City Council (CCC) is sensitive to the changing population in this city. No longer is it just a mixture of slums, blue collar areas, and students. It is a city becoming increasingly white collar and middle class. Many of us are performing urban redevelopment for the betterment of Cambridge at our own expense by buying and upgrading previously run-down, decaying property. The CCC, however, is not changing with the times, and is not giving us support.

Gone are the days of a Cambridge full of young people just out of college who rented and did not own property and were not trying to make permanent homes and/or raise families. They were at liberty to waste their time and yours with issues like sister cities in the Ukraine or wherever and hiding illegal immigrants. It was fun, but now it is time to grow up. Unless the CCC starts tackling the issues common to most residential communities, we will move out again, and leave you with a decaying urban dump and suffering blue collar and low income families who cannot afford to leave.

Many of us do not feel that the CCC is giving Cambridge much support in the areas of crime prevention, Harvard expansion, and basic services like, say, snow removal. Silly little things that student/intellectuals do not care to trouble themselves with. I was a college student in the late 60's and I lived through the "radicalization" of society at that time. I have not lost my obligation to be involved or I would not be writing to you. I do not think the CCC is doing its job in regard to the homeless and hungry in this city. A person without food is not much interested in whether restaurants have smoking and non-smoking areas.

It would be fine if the CCC did both their job and diddled with fashionable political issues. But you are doing only the latter.

I truly feel that if it were not for the strange voting procedures in this city, many of the CCC members would be out of a job. In any case, I re-iterate, it is time the CCC started acting like one and not like a student association.

Sincerely yours,

Marilyn J. Marotta

Marilyn J. Marotta

12 Surrey Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
July 29, 1985

Mr. Anthony G. Paolillo
Chief of Police
City of Cambridge
5 Western Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter to the editor from the July 25th issue of the Cambridge Chronicle which describes a problem that is not being dealt with and is definitely getting worse.

First of all, it is my understanding that a person riding a bicycle, i.e. not walking it, must follow the rules of the road the same as any motor vehicle driver and is not considered a pedestrian, as the officers in the letter maintained. In fact, I thought you had stated just that in a recent article in the Cambridge Chronicle - I may be mistaken. In any case, would you be willing to clarify the issue in print?

Secondly, I have had several potentially serious near-accidents involving bicyclists, as a driver and pedestrian, and the bicyclists have always been adults - college students, people exercising or going to work - not children, who instinctively seem to have more sense. And all the bicyclists had been going at high speed and breaking a traffic law. This menace, of course, becomes worse during the school year when many more college students are in the city.

I have also enclose a small article from the New York Times which sums up pretty well how most of us residents, including some conscientious bicyclists, feel and I agree with the Chronicle letter that it is a problem easily dealt with. Just this evening around 6 PM I relaxed in my living room and looked out the front windows onto Surrey Street and in less than 10 minutes, seven (seven!) adult bicyclists had barrelled down the street the wrong way, all adults. I would be delighted to have one of your officers over for coffee and dessert and he could nab a few of them at the same time. Going down Surrey Street the wrong way is particularly dangerous because when one makes the turn onto it from Banks Street, parked cars block the view. The only reason I haven't creamed a bicyclist is because I go slowly enough on that turn for us to see each other coming.

- 2 -

I would also like to add that I am one of many Cambridge residents who oppose the need for a Civilian Review Board of the Cambridge Police Department. We believe that a less demeaning and insulting approach should be used to solve any management problems that may exist in your department. If one is created, it most definitely should not include anyone from or appointed by the Cambridge City Council. A consultant with experience in law enforcement management should be used. However, the Cambridge City Council showed its lack of management expertise by attacking you publicly. You do not have to go to Harvard Business School to know that you NEVER chew out your staff in public, which is what they really did. It is demoralizing and solves nothing. It also has quite the opposite effect on the rest of the staff, in this case, the public; the person doing the chewing out is the boss and he/she is doing something wrong, too. It's called scapegoating and/or the pecking order. No organization is perfect, but most of us simply cannot see exactly what the Cambridge City Council is getting so worked up about.

Since I am sending a copy of this to Vice Mayor Duehay anyway, I might as well add here that many of us feel that the CCC should get out of the play-pen and start acting like adults. Going after authority figures, like the police or the immigration service or Department of Defense (e.g. Draper), is immature behaviour. We would prefer they deal with critical issues like crime, insane bicyclists, housing, the homeless, the hungry, zoning, all the things we elected them to do, rather than sit around and pass resolutions asking us to break the law, like hiding or hiring illegal immigrants.

In any case, the Cambridge police have always been nice to me. But then I don't drag people off their bicycles and try to rob them, or break into houses, or sell drugs, etc., etc., etc...

Sincerely yours,

Marilyn J. Marotta
Marilyn J. Marotta

Copies to:

Vice Mayor Duehay and the Cambridge City Council

Crazy bikers

The City of Cambridge and, quite possibly, the entire Boston Metro area, has a serious problem. That is, bicyclists with a total disregard for the rules of the road. I recently moved here from San Francisco and in the span of two weeks I have been broadsided by a bicyclist and had to skid to a stop to avoid two others crossing an intersection. In both cases, the bicyclist(s) went through red lights.

When I was broadsided I had the police fill out an accident report at the scene. They suggested that I shouldn't do it since, in Massachusetts, a bicyclist is classified as a pedestrian and it would probably be judged as my fault anyway. I'm still confused how it could be my fault since I would have had to have driven sideways to hit him!

Every single day I've seen bicyclists run red lights, go the wrong way on one-way streets, weave in and out of traffic and, in general, display a total unconcern for other vehicles. In fact, I've stood on street corners looking in all directions for automobiles, watching for a walk signal and then stepped off the curb to a crosswalk and almost got rammed more than once by a bicyclist yelling "Hey, watch it!"

I mean driving around here is bad enough. I have a friend in California who says "Oh yeah, Boston ...there

aren't any stop signs there!" I should take him to the Registry of Motor Vehicles to apply for a license if he really wants an experience. I know residents here who drive to Watertown to get their licenses rather than deal with the mess on Nashua Street.

I hear that the City of Boston is losing money and the State is ahead which is also probably the case for Cambridge. The unemployment rate is the lowest in the country here so it is probably superfluous to suggest another job idea or revenue generator. But what about something for safety, or something to ease the number of court cases involving automobile operators driving sideways to hit pedestrians on bicycles.

Put some Police Academy summer students on Cushman's with ticket books and have them concentrate on these crazy bicycle operators. Also have the bicyclist go to a school session to learn the rules after an infraction. In fact, they should have a license and exam to drive on public streets anyway since they are supposed to obey all the traffic laws pertaining to automobile driving. With the little kids, send them home with a ticket for their parents. A few of these and by the time they are teenagers they'll know what to do.

Herb Cockcroft
Cottage street

NEW YORK Day by Day

The Bicycle Threat

Two cyclists, both going much faster than the automobile traffic, collided. One, riding north on Park Avenue, ran a red light and hit the other, heading west on East 66th.

Pedestrians burst into applause. "It could have been any one of us," said one.

Public hostility toward cowboy cyclists is increasing, and one of the most hostile is Bette Dewing, who seven years ago founded Pedestrians First.

"I saw a certain kind of lawlessness going on," she said. "Bicyclists are a unique threat — traveling on sidewalks, silently going the wrong way on one-way streets, most not obeying any laws."

She holds meetings twice a month, lectures to police officers and hopes to drum up enough support to require bicycle license plates to help in the

apprehension of lawbreaking riders. This year, from January through Oct. 31, the police issued 4,972 summonses to cyclists.

More than 40 traffic police officers crammed into the meeting room at the Manhattan Traffic Area headquarters on West 30th Street yesterday to listen to Miss Dewing, and voice their complaints. "We can't run after these guys," said one. "Licenses would definitely help. Right now, we have no way of identifying violators."

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Comm. from Marilyn J. Marotta, 12 Surrey St.,
relative to the "bicycle menace" and also, her
views on the Cambridge City Council.

copy sent to the City Manager + Chief of
Police 8/8/85 mh

In City Council,

August 5, 1985

8/5/1985

Referred to the
City Manager and
Chief of Police
for
Report