

Community Development

Community Development will play a role in addressing PTDM (Parking and Transportation Demand Management) and zoning questions. Future participation of CDD staff will be arranged as needed and all questions from the neighborhood will be delivered to appropriate staff as they arise.

Public Health risk summary

Despite presence of some radioactive material in the encasement of the cyclotron, the decommissioning and removal should not pose a significant risk to residents or employees. The Massachusetts standard for allowable radioactive exposure (10 milliREM per year) is the lowest in the United States and will be required within the final decommissioning plan. Harvard has already stated its intention to adhere to a voluntary 1 milliREM per year standard, a level that is well below the average radiation exposure encountered by individuals under normal circumstances.

The potential health effects of the PCBs, mercury and other chemicals found during preliminary testing cannot be assessed until more soil testing is completed. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), upon receipt of Harvard's Notice of Responsibility in December 2001, now regulates this 60 Oxford St site under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP). This clean-up program requires an assessment of public health risk as a result of contamination. Preliminary data suggests that the concentrations of contaminants in the soil do not pose a significant threat, but subsequent reports will establish the degree of risk with greater certainty.

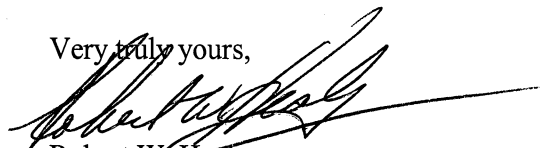
In addition, Inspectional Services Commissioner Robert Bersani reports the following:

The proposed construction of a parking garage by Harvard and the related demolition of the Harvard Cyclotron Laboratory have raised questions and concerns from area residents. Mr. Bersani and his staff are available to respond to any questions or problems from the Agassiz Neighborhood concerning building construction in the area.

In meetings and discussions with Harvard representatives concerning this project, Mr. Bersani has stressed the importance of complying with City Ordinances as they relate to construction and the State Building Code. In particular, I have stressed the importance of complying with the Noise Ordinance as it pertains to allowable hours of work and the requirements of the State Building Code concerning protection of adjacent structures. I have suggested that Harvard conduct pre-construction surveys of adjacent buildings and monitor vibrations during demolition and construction operations to insure that vibrations do not exceed threshold values. I have also suggested that Harvard provide information on a regular basis to the neighborhood concerning planned construction milestones and operations. Harvard has been receptive to these suggestions.

Finally, the neighborhood has raised concerns about the possibility of health related impacts from this project. In this regard, Mr. Bersani will insure that the Inspectional Services Department will coordinate closely with the City Chief Public Health Officer and appropriate State agencies prior to issuing any permits and also during construction as may be necessary.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec

Public Involvement Coordinator at the Department of Environmental Protection and may receive assistance from the Cambridge Public Health Department if requested.

On February 7, 2002 The Cambridge Historical Commission held a hearing to review the Harvard Cyclotron Laboratory building for Preferably Preserved status. A final decision not to assign this protection was made, opening the way for the issuance of a demolition permit by the Inspectional Services Department.

Some concern has been raised by residents about the impact of excavation for such a deep underground garage structure so close to a still-active Cyclotron. The City of Cambridge and local neighbors made a request to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Radiation Control Program (RCP) to active review this proposed excavation with regard to the safe operation of the Cyclotron. The Harvard Environmental Health and Safety Office will submit a written response to the RCP.

The issuance of a building permit by Inspectional Services for the 5-storey underground garage immediately adjacent to the Cyclotron is being held pending resolution of this matter.

Anticipated ongoing role for City staff

City staff from Public Health, Inspectional Services, Public Works and Community Development departments expect to offer some assurance that public health risks are properly characterized and contained, appropriate zoning is observed, and nuisance dust and noise limits are enforced. While many arrangements between the university and the neighborhood are being discussed to assure that disturbance is minimized, City enforcement of public health and building codes will offer minimum standards that the university must meet. While residents bring considerable influence to the discussion, the participation of City staff can clearly establish that existing codes and regulations will be strictly enforced.

Public Health

The Public Health Department offers experience working with neighbors on other development projects across Cambridge that have posed potential threats to local public health or quality of life. By helping to review state regulatory documents for protection of public health and the environment and maintaining strict adherence to public health standards this department can limit the concern that regulatory processes with little direct oversight will be carried out with appropriate scrutiny. This Public Health advocacy and review function can be useful to the neighborhood because of the familiarity of this department with the regulatory processes and the state regulators themselves. Furthermore, state regulators are accustomed to working directly with local health officials.

Inspectional Services

Issuance of demolition and construction permits is within the purview of the Inspectional Services Department. This department is also responsible for responding to construction-related nuisances (excessive odor, noise, vibration). A representative from Inspectional Services was present at the February 1 planning meeting to answer questions from participants and will be available to participate in smaller meetings that relate to permits and local enforcement of the Building and Public Health codes.

Public Works

Public Works has oversight responsibilities for maintenance of sewer and storm water delivery systems and has been requested to be available to this process. The neighborhood has experience major disruptions over the past several years from major sewer-storm upgrade activities and other unanticipated disruptions. Public Health was present at the February 1 meeting and has indicated that an appropriate staff person will be available to address questions and concerns at future discussions as needed.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

February 25, 2002

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 02-07, regarding a report on providing technical support to the Agassiz area during construction by Harvard University, Chief Public Health Officer Harold Cox and Director of Environmental Health Sam Lipson report the following:

At the request of local residents the staff from several City of Cambridge departments have become directly involved in discussions over the development of the 52-60 Oxford Street parcel at the corner of Hammond Street. This cooperation between Harvard University, the Agassiz neighborhood and City of Cambridge staff has focused around discussions that pertain to the proposed development of the Oxford-Hammond parcel. Some discussion pertaining to the long term development plans for the entire North Campus (or North Precinct) area will take place, though participating City staff will be primarily concerned with the immediate development site.

The primary role for City staff will be to support the neighborhood in addressing environmental, public health, zoning, and nuisance concerns already raised and those that may yet be raised. A summary of the issues that have been raised by local residents and City staff was submitted to the Council on January 24. Although this cooperative process will take clearer shape as Harvard produces more detailed development plans and submits state-mandated reports, actions already taken and roles to be played by each municipal department can be clarified.

Actions taken so far

Cambridge Public Health Department staff participated in meetings in mid-January with representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (chemical contamination) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (cyclotron decommissioning and radiation control). These meetings had representation from the Agassiz neighborhood. Some of these Agassiz participants later summarized the issues that came out of these meetings during the Agassiz Neighborhood Council meeting on January 15th of this year.

Agassiz neighbors, City staff, and Harvard representatives held a joint meeting on February 1 to arrange ongoing coordination and information-sharing between these parties. A series of public discussions between Harvard and the neighborhood (not yet scheduled) will be held to examine long-term development plans for the North Campus (or North Precinct) area: Biology labs, Divinity School, Law School. Though the neighborhood and the university will be engaging in negotiation throughout these discussions, the City will participate as appropriate in order to provide technical support and clarification of local and state regulatory processes.

Cambridge Public Health staff have offered guidance on designating the parcel as a DEP Public Involvement Process (PIP) site with minimal effort. This designation will allow public review of all related regulatory documents, a 20-day comment period for each phase of clean-up, and public meetings (if requested) with Harvard to discuss each report once it is issued. Residents will write this plan with the

Consent Agenda #8

Awaiting Report Item
Number 02-07, regarding a
report on providing technical
support to the Agassiz area
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Harvard University.

In City Council February 25, 2002

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