

City of Cambridge

The Environment Committee conducted a public hearing on Thursday April 11, 1991 beginning at 5:40 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber, City Hall.

Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Chair of the above referenced Committee convened the hearing and stated that this evening's discussion would center on the Cambridge Environmental Program as prepared by Jon Kessler of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University dated March 1, 1991. Present at the hearing were: Councillor Edward N. Cyr, Councillor Sheila T. Russell and City Clerk Joseph E. Connarton.

To begin the discussion, Councillor Duehay provided the Committee with the following background information that lead to the authorship of this report: Mr. Kessler was requested to review the City's current environmental functions and to meet with a specially assembled Committee designated by the City Manager and chaired by Deputy City Manager Richard C. Rossi for their technical support and comments.

Mr. Kessler citing the importance of environmental issues on the local level given past city experience with water quality, Scheme Z, the parking freeze, to name a few, suggested a new City approach to dealing with future environmental concerns. In his report, Mr. Kessler recommended the creation of the Cambridge Environmental Program (CEP) within the Executive Department. This three person department, staffed by a Director and two staff assistants, with a projected annual budget of \$205,000.00 would provide technical and liaison services between the City Manager, City departments and the business community.

Mr. Kessler stated that the CEP would achieve its purpose through a strategy of empowerment, a different approach to meet emerging environmental issues. The CEP would serve to provide coordination and staff support for an interdepartmental environmental impact response procedure.

Another recommendation forwarded by Mr. Kessler calls for an Environmental Permit Program in new construction projects in Cambridge. This permit program, a voluntary one, would set clearly defined standards such as provision of recycling chutes, commuter assistance, landscaping guidelines as well as offer incentives for developer participation.

Councillor Russell questioned the already existing commuter assistance program vis a vis the proposed program.

Mr. Kessler stated that Community Development is currently working on it but it is only a start and it lacks the good will of business.

Councillor Duehay questioned the funding source for the CEP.

Mr. Kessler identified the following three funding sources:

1. Revamping of the City's waste collection program:
2. Transfer of \$40,000.00 from Community Development for commuter assistance, and;
3. Parking ticket fine increase.

Councillor Cyr questioned where the line is drawn between quality of life issues and design issues.

Mr. Kessler in response stated that one track sets standards, the other is for the developer to obtain a permit.

Mr. Michael Rosenberg, Assistant City Manager for Community Development offered his congratulations to Mr. Kessler in drafting this report. He further stated that there exists a need to further review the administration aspect of the CEP and defended his department's commuter assistance plan.

Mr. Doug Fine of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection - Waste Site Cleanup stated his agency's approval of the proposed and recommended approach forwarded by Mr. Kessler. He further stated his support for the coordination aspect of the plan.

Ms. Mary Kennedy of the Committee on Public Planting stated that trees, parks, open space, etc. should be more strongly considered in the Environmental Permit Program.

Mr. Jack Kelly, City Arborist, stated his belief that the language of the report was not strong enough in the area of greenspace.

Ms. Ellen Kaye, East Cambridge CARRAT, stated that some mechanism should be established for citizens to understand all state and federal forms and that prevention is important in the process.

Mr. Dean Johnson of Cambridge Citizens for Liveable Neighborhoods stated his support for the proposal due to the technical and coordination benefits that it would bring to the City. He suggested that the SIP be implemented by the new department.

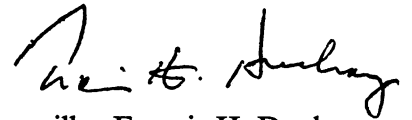
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Jonathan Kaledin, Esquire suggested that the environmental permitting program be coordinated with the Planning Boards's special permit granting authority.

Councillor Duehay stated that the permitting program is still under review and a decision would be rendered in the upcoming weeks.

The hearing was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis H. Duehay", written in a cursive style.

Councillor Francis H. Duehay
Chair

1. S-653
COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report from Committee on Environment for
a hearing held on Thursday, April 11, 1991
regarding the Cambridge Environmental
Program.

In City Council,

May 13, 1991

*Report accepted
Placed on file*