



Cambridge Arts Council

57 Inman Street Cambridge, MA 02139 (617) 349-4380

December 16, 1997

The Honorable Sheila T. Russell
Mayor of Cambridge
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mayor Russell:

On behalf of the members of the Cambridge Arts Council, I formally ask that the City Council reconsider its request of the City Manager to place the Fresh Pond public art project on hold pending completion of the masterplan. The art is a water feature integrally linked to the construction of the building and water system (pipes, etc.) and can only be built as part of that construction effort. To place the project on hold is tantamount to canceling it.

Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi conducted a public meeting on open space and art at Fresh Pond last Tuesday, December 9, 1997 in response to City Council Order #198. The City Council has responded to Communication Order #30 without benefit of Mr. Rossi's report to the City Manager and the City Manager's decision.

As the architectural plans and renderings presented at the public meeting indicate, significant changes have been made to the plans for the Weir Meadow area in response to the public's concerns. The art has been relocated closer to the pond (from 165' to 80') and reduced from 4,000 sqft to 2,200 sqft. Of the 86,500 sqft that comprise the meadow, 39,000 sqft were previously marked for the wetland (swales). The wetland area has been reduced to 18,300 sqft. As the meeting report would indicate, all technical concerns have been addressed and a majority of the public represented at the meeting were pleased with the changes and supportive of the project moving forward.

The masterplan is not expected to be completed for a year. This artwork can only be built when the building, weir, and water system construction takes place. The construction requires Federal, State and Local permits, shutting down the water supply, relocating pipes, etc. The engineers and architects tell us this project cannot happen after this construction effort and that it is not possible to bid and build it separately.

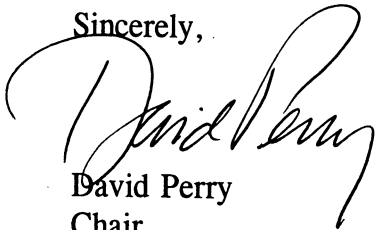
We believe the public process has allowed for significant and meaningful changes to this project. Cambridge will have more open space at the location and the art is less than 1% of the area. Although the opponents of the project maintain they are not anti-art, they are against this artwork. More people support this artwork and the Cambridge artist who created it. Most people are satisfied with the process that has resulted in these significant changes.

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Putting a hold on this project would mean that the project would never be built. Does the City Council really want the City Manager to stop this project from being built when there is more public support for it than opposition to it? Are you aware of the number of people who have become supporters due to concerns being addressed that resulted in a return of a significant amount of open space? The artist, Mags Harries, has been unusual in her willingness to change her proposal. The art has been moved within the wetland area so it will require a minimum amount of space.

As you will learn, there are no significant technical concerns left to address. As the opponents of the art acknowledged at the public meeting, the opposition to the project is simply based on their preference that the art not be built. For the opponents to say that they are not opposed to the art, only its placement, is disingenuous. The opposition is directed against Mags Harries' design. Her good faith effort to respond empathetically to the concerns raised are about to be ignored by City Councillors. The City Council should review the changes and hear Mr. Rossi's report to the City Manager. Termination of this project would be a call for censorship of the proposed artwork.

Sincerely,



David Perry
Chair
Public Art Committee

cc: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

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Consent Communication #4

5-798

Communication was received from David Perry, Chair, Public Art Committee, transmitting concern regarding City Council order requesting delay of action on the Fresh Pond public art project.

In City Council December 22, 1997

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