



# City of Cambridge

4.  
SUBSTITUTED ORDER  
IN CITY COUNCIL

October 28, 1991

COUNCILLOR MYERS

ORDERED: That Her Honor, the Mayor, be and hereby is requested to appoint a special sub-committee of two City Councillors for the purpose of conducting a hearing relative to the Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation and that the City Manager be and hereby is requested to provide the sub-committee with the necessary information from all appropriate individuals relating to the issues surrounding this property; and be it further

ORDERED: That the sub-committee report back to the City Council at its meeting scheduled for November 18, 1991.

In City Council October 28, 1991.  
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.  
Attest:- Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk.

A true copy; *Joseph E. Connarton*

ATTEST:-

Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk



# City of Cambridge

4.  
ORIGINAL ORDER  
IN CITY COUNCIL

October 28, 1991

## COUNCILLOR WALSH

**WHEREAS:** While the content of the attached article from The Boston Globe (October 18, 1991) focuses attention on Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation (RCCC) relative to the disposition of an effort to evict a number of tenants for nonpayment of rent in 11 of its rent controlled units, it underscores the timidity and failure of this Council to act on previously adopted Council Orders which I have sponsored (April 22, 1991; June 3, 1991; September 16, 1991) wherein I called for a full Hearing in Council Session for the purpose of inquiring into the Board of Riverside/Cambridgeport Community Housing Inc.'s operation of 59 units of low and moderate income housing in Cambridgeport; and

**WHEREAS:** This obstinate refusal to schedule the ordered Hearing contradicts any expressed commitment to really care about providing affordable housing for tenants of low and moderate income and conveys a king of "We don't want to know" syndrome when it comes to trying to find out what RCCHI's modus operandi really is all about; now therefore be it

**ORDERED:** That a full hearing take place on this issue in Council Session on November 4, 1991; that Her Honor, the Mayor, invite the Board Members of RCCHI and an appropriate representative from Cambridge Savings Bank to be in attendance; and be it further

**ORDERED:** That the City Manager direct the following persons to be present and prepared to participate in the Hearing: Executive Director of the Rent Control Board; Members of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; City Solicitor; Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

# Tenants are owed money

## Cambridge rent-control board rules on poor conditions

By Gary S. Chafetz  
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

CAMBRIDGE — In a bitter eviction proceeding pitting rent-control supporters against each other, the Cambridge Rent Control Board has ruled that a community-based landlord, trying to evict 11 tenants for nonpayment of rent, in fact owes those tenants thousands of dollars.

The dispute centers around deteriorating conditions at 11 rent-controlled units in the Cambridgeport section of the city. The units, according to tenant advocates and city officials, have been mismanaged for some time.

In refusing to grant the evictions, the Rent Board declared that the poor conditions of the apartments diminished their value and ordered the landlord to pay reparations to the tenants.

The board ruled Wednesday night that the tenants, who had withheld rent for a year, had been overcharged for the past six years. In all but one case the overcharges exceeded the amount of rent withheld.

"Both tenants and landlords are good people," Joseph Beckmann, a tenant leader, said yesterday. "The rent board said they were bad managers and goodness has nothing to do with it."

According to the landlord, an affiliate of the Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation the rent strike forced the owners into federal bankruptcy court in April after its lenders initiated foreclosure proceedings.

"This was a railroading. The board twisted its own regulations. It screws up affordable housing across the board" in Cambridge, said the landlord's lawyer, Carole Neville, who represents William Noble and the other owners.

But the tenants and their representatives disagreed.

"These people fervently believe that their wonderful intentions to provide affordable housing should carry the day," said tenant attorney Marcia C. Peters. "But wonderful intentions don't solve the tar stalactites coming through the hole in Robert Collins' ceiling," Peters said of one of the tenants' apartments.

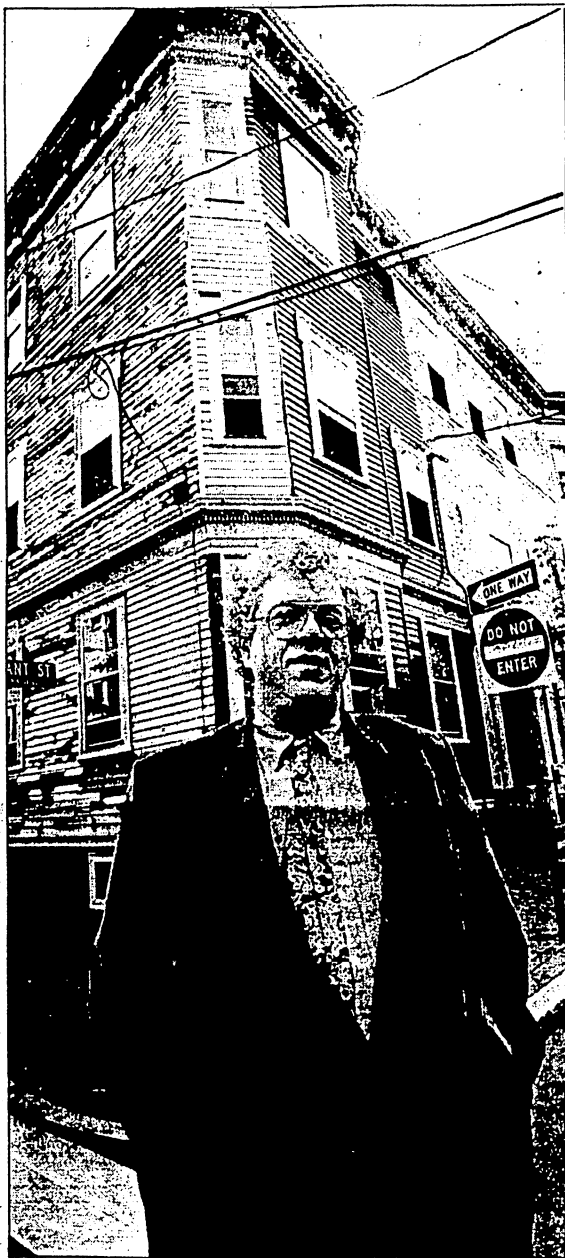
Neville, who said she plans to appeal the decision to Middlesex Superior Court, charged that the tenants tried to use the units' conditions as a way of gaining control of the apartments.

On Tuesday, bankruptcy court Judge Carol Kenner is scheduled to rule on whether the landlord must accept a \$600,000 offer for its six buildings made by a nonprofit Cambridge developer. In the meantime the court could appoint a trustee to manage the properties until their disposition is determined.

The tenants say they support both options.

Those opposed to rent control said they were amused by the warring between the landlord and tenants, both of whom are rent-control proponents.

"What intrigues me the most is that [if] Bill Noble, who is one of



Tenant leader Joseph Beckmann stands outside 26 Pleasant St. in Cambridgeport, one of the units embroiled in a rent-control dispute.

rent control's strongest proponents ... can't make it work, how in the hell does he expect us to make it work?" said Denise Jillson, cochairwoman of the Small Property Owners Association, an organization opposed to rent control.

Noble declined to comment. Noble did state in an affidavit filed with US Bankruptcy Court, "[We] are not some rich, absentee landlord pulling profits out of the ... properties. [The] tenants have apparently concocted that sort of bogeyman image to rationalize actions which in the end served only to block or delay necessary rent increases."

The properties, at six sites near River Street in Cambridgeport, were purchased in 1981 by a group of housing activists to keep them affordable for residents of the immediate neighborhood. A consortium of

eight banks provided attractive financing.

"The fatal flaw existed at the start. They did not adequately rehab the properties, and what that led to was high and continuous maintenance costs," said Susan Schlesinger, housing director of the city's Community Development Department.

Beckmann, a leader of the tenant rent strike, in part disagrees, saying the original property manager squandered cash on operating expenses rather than on capital improvements.

Beckmann also faulted complicated rent control rules for getting in the way of providing affordable housing.

Mayor  
Councillor ~~W~~

substituted #4.  
Feb. 28, 1991

Ordered:

That Her Honor the Mayor be and hereby  
is requested to appoint a special sub-committee  
of two city councillors for the purpose of conducting  
a hearing relative to the Riverside Cambridgeport  
Community Corporation and that the City manager  
be and hereby is requested to provide the  
sub-committee with the necessary information  
from all appropriate individuals relating to these  
matters surrounding this property, and be it further

Ordered:

That the sub-committee report back to

The Life Comm at its meeting, scheduled

for November 18, 1991

v/u



# CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

(617) 498-9094

William H. Walsh  
City Councillor

4-

BY HAND

October 23, 1991

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Joseph E. Connarton  
City Clerk

FROM: David Noonan, for *DN*  
Councillor Walsh

RE: Council Order (NON CONSENT AGENDA) for  
Monday, October 28, 1991

Councillor Walsh requests that the enclosed Council Order regarding Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation be included in the NON CONSENT AGENDA for the Council Session scheduled for October 28, 1991.

As usual, your courtesy and cooperation are much appreciated.

(ENCLOSURE)

CC: Councillor Walsh

1991 OCT 24 AM 9:16  
CAMBRIDGE MA.



# City of Cambridge

IN CITY COUNCIL

Councillor Walsh

October 28, 1991

WHEREAS: While the content of the attached article from The Boston Globe (October 18, 1991) focuses attention on Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation (RCCC) relative to the disposition of an effort to evict a number of tenants for nonpayment of rent in 11 of its rent controlled units, it underscores the timidity and failure of this Council to act on previously adopted Council Orders which I have sponsored (April 22, 1991; June 3, 1991; September 16, 1991) wherein I called for a full Hearing in Council Session for the purpose of inquiring into the Board of Riverside/Cambridgeport Community Housing Inc.'s operation of 59 units of low and moderate income housing in Cambridgeport; and

WHEREAS: This obstinate refusal to schedule the ordered Hearing contradicts any expressed commitment to really care about providing affordable housing for tenants of low and moderate income and conveys a kind of " We don't want to know " syndrome when it comes to trying to find out what RCCHI's modus operandi really is all about; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That a full Hearing take place on this issue in Council Session on November 4, 1991; that Her Honor, the Mayor, invite the Board Members of RCCHI and an appropriate representative from Cambridge Savings Bank to be in attendance; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager direct the following persons to be present and prepared to participate in the Hearing: Executive Director of the Rent Control Board; Members of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; City Solicitor; Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

(ATTACHMENT)

# Tenants are owed money

## Cambridge rent-control board rules on poor conditions

By Gary S. Chafetz  
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

**CAMBRIDGE** — In a bitter eviction proceeding pitting rent-control supporters against each other, the Cambridge Rent Control Board has ruled that a community-based landlord, trying to evict 11 tenants for nonpayment of rent, in fact owes those tenants thousands of dollars.

The dispute centers around deteriorating conditions at 11 rent-controlled units in the Cambridgeport section of the city. The units, according to tenant advocates and city officials, have been mismanaged for some time.

In refusing to grant the evictions, the Rent Board declared that the poor conditions of the apartments diminished their value and ordered the landlord to pay reparations to the tenants.

The board ruled Wednesday night that the tenants, who had withheld rent for a year, had been overcharged for the past six years. In all but one case the overcharges exceeded the amount of rent withheld.

"Both tenants and landlords are good people," Joseph Beckmann, a tenant leader, said yesterday. "The rent board said they were bad managers and goodness has nothing to do with it."

According to the landlord, an affiliate of the Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation the rent strike forced the owners into federal bankruptcy court in April after its lenders initiated foreclosure proceedings.

"This was a railroading. The board twisted its own regulations. It screws up affordable housing across the board" in Cambridge, said the landlord's lawyer, Carole Neville, who represents William Noble and the other owners.

But the tenants and their representatives disagreed.

"These people fervently believe that their wonderful intentions to provide affordable housing should carry the day," said tenant attorney Marcia C. Peters. "But wonderful intentions don't solve the tar stalactites coming through the hole in Robert Collins' ceiling," Peters said of one of the tenants' apartments.

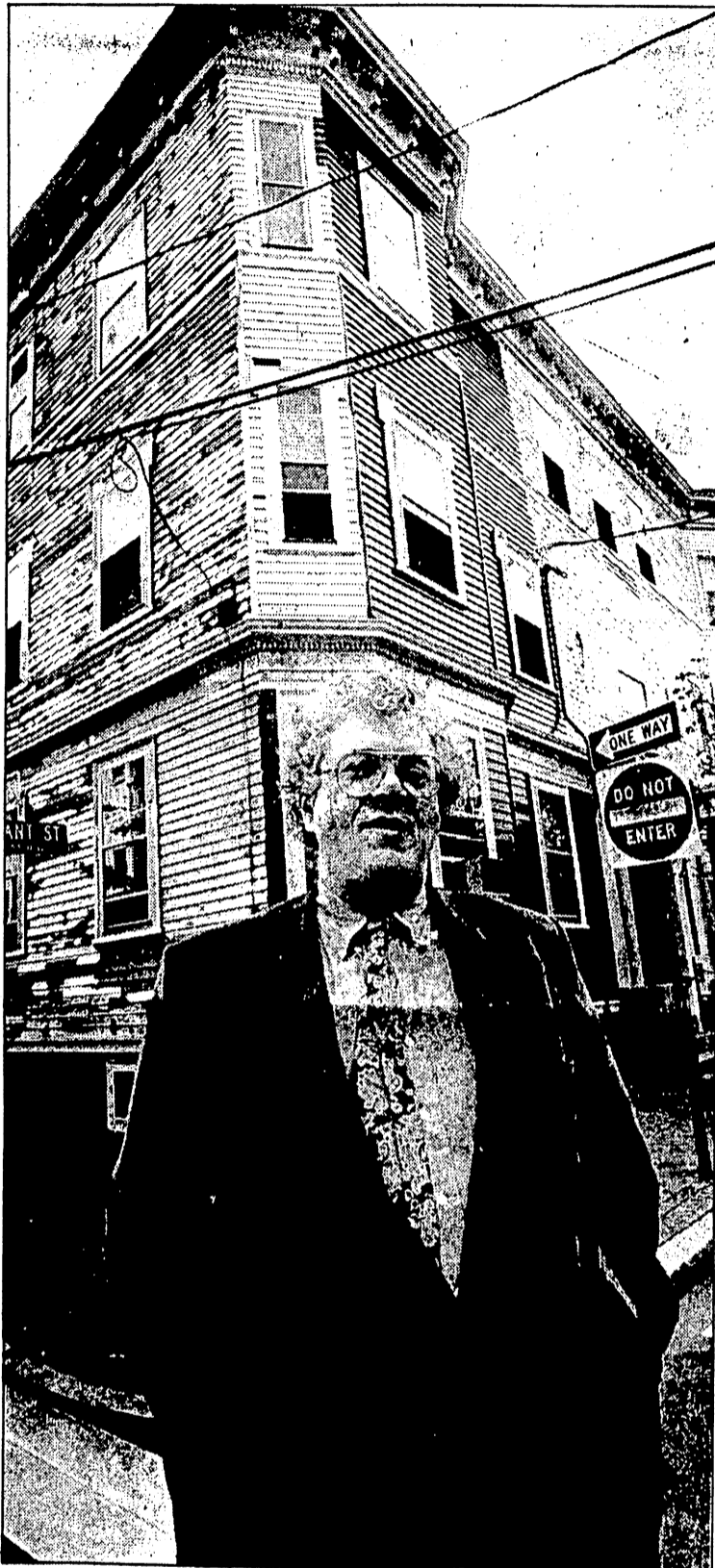
Neville, who said she plans to appeal the decision to Middlesex Superior Court, charged that the tenants tried to use the units' conditions as a way of gaining control of the apartments.

On Tuesday, bankruptcy court Judge Carol Kenner is scheduled to rule on whether the landlord must accept a \$600,000 offer for its six buildings made by a nonprofit Cambridge developer. In the meantime the court could appoint a trustee to manage the properties until their disposition is determined.

The tenants say they support both options.

Those opposed to rent control said they were amused by the warring between the landlord and tenants, both of whom are rent-control proponents.

"What intrigues me the most is that [if] Bill Noble, who is one of



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / BARRY CHIN  
Tenant leader Joseph Beckmann stands outside 26 Pleasant St. in Cambridgeport, one of the units embroiled in a rent-control dispute.

rent control's strongest proponents can't make it work, how in the hell does he expect us to make it work?" said Denise Jillson, cochairwoman of the Small Property Owners Association, an organization opposed to rent control.

Noble declined to comment. Noble did state in an affidavit filed with US Bankruptcy Court, "[We] are not some rich, absentee landlord pulling profits out of the ... properties. [The] tenants have apparently concocted that sort of bogeyman image to rationalize actions which in the end served only to block or delay necessary rent increases."

The properties, at six sites near River Street in Cambridgeport, were purchased in 1981 by a group of housing activists to keep them affordable for residents of the immediate neighborhood. A consortium of

eight banks provided attractive financing.

"The fatal flaw existed at the start. They did not adequately rehab the properties, and what that led to was high and continuous maintenance costs," said Susan Schlesinger, housing director of the city's Community Development Department.

Beckmann, a leader of the tenant rent strike, in part disagrees, saying the original property manager squandered cash on operating expenses rather than on capital improvements.

Beckmann also faulted complicated rent control rules for getting in the way of providing affordable housing.



# City of Cambridge

4.

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 28, 1991

## COUNCILLOR WALSH

**WHEREAS:** While the content of the attached article from The Boston Globe (October 18, 1991) focuses attention on Riverside Cambridgeport Community Corporation (RCCC) relative to the disposition of an effort to evict a number of tenants for nonpayment of rent in 11 of its rent controlled units, it underscores the timidity and failure of this Council to act on previously adopted Council Orders which I have sponsored (April 22, 1991; June 3, 1991; September 16, 1991) wherein I called for a full Hearing in Council Session for the purpose of inquiring into the Board of Riverside/Cambridgeport Community Housing Inc.'s operation of 59 units of low and moderate income housing in Cambridgeport; and

**WHEREAS:** This obstinate refusal to schedule the ordered Hearing contradicts any expressed commitment to really care about providing affordable housing for tenants of low and moderate income and conveys a kind of "We don't want to know" syndrome when it comes to trying to find out what RCCHI's modus operandi really is all about; now therefore be it

**ORDERED:** That a full hearing take place on this issue in Council Session on November 4, 1991; that Her Honor, the Mayor, invite the Board Members of RCCHI and an appropriate representative from Cambridge Savings Bank to be in attendance; and be it further

**ORDERED:** That the City Manager direct the following persons to be present and prepared to participate in the Hearing: Executive Director of the Rent Control Board; Members of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; City Solicitor; Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

NON-CONSENT ORDER # 4

S 1148

Councillor Walsh re: hearing between  
RCCHI and Cambridge Savings Bank on  
November 4, 1991.

In City Council,

October 28, 1991

*Substituted order  
Adapted as submitted  
by Councillor Myers.*