

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

TO: Robert Healy, Acting City Manager
FROM: Conrad Fagone, Commissioner, PWD
David Vickery, Assistant City Manager
for Community Development
SUBJECT: Sidewalk Reconstruction

DATE: July 29, 1981

For the last several years our departments have been operating under a City Council mandate that leaves the choice of brick or concrete sidewalks up to majority vote of property owners on a particular street. Each material has its distinct advantages and disadvantages; and since opinions vary widely throughout the City, the Council's policy constituted the best solution to what was often a thorny issue.

For the last decade brick has always been more expensive than concrete. However, during the last several years the price differential has been increasing dramatically. Last fiscal year's prices were about \$18 per linear foot of sidewalk for concrete and about \$30 per linear foot for brick. (These are average figures; prices can vary considerably from job to job depending on sidewalk width, curb condition, sub-base condition, etc.). Under this year's street and sidewalk contract, concrete is about \$22 and brick has jumped to over \$50. As the price differential becomes greater, it becomes increasingly difficult to program work, since we do not know until the vote is taken whether, for example, we will be spending \$50,000 on a street or \$120,000. Further, there remains in the City a tremendous amount of sidewalk reconstruction to be done. Every brick job means less sidewalk work in a particular year.

Another problem with the current policy is that it often leads to extremely emotional and bitter disputes. One can safely generalize that the younger, newer residents often favor brick, usually for aesthetic reasons, while the elderly usually favor concrete for practical reasons. Whichever side "organizes" is likely to win the vote, and, of course, it is the former group which is likely to organize. There have been a number of cases where the initial tally favored concrete, but lobbying generated sufficient altered votes to change the result.

Thus we feel that, current prices aside, there are sufficient reasons for reexamining the City's brick/concrete policy. The new price differential of brick costing two and one half times concrete makes a change absolutely necessary. In an era of shrinking resources, we find it difficult to justify the exorbitant cost of brick, particularly in view of the amount of sidewalk upgrading needed.

There could be exceptions to a "concrete only" policy, but they are realistically limited. For example, where all owners on a block agree to pay the cost differential, brick could certainly be installed. On the other hand, permitting property owners to pay the differential for brick on a property by property basis would produce a hodge-podge of brick and concrete which we feel is undesirable, and would increase costs for both brick and concrete because of decreased construction efficiencies.

Further, the Historical Commission might choose to designate a select number of streets for which brick sidewalks would constitute a critical element in overall historical or architectural character. However these designations should be done in advance of scheduled sidewalk reconstruction, in accordance with strict criteria, to preclude what might become intense lobbying.

We request that you seek from City Council a change in policy which specifies only concrete for City funded sidewalks, perhaps with the exceptions noted above. The new policy could be reevaluated in future years if the brick-concrete price differential decreases significantly.



City of Cambridge

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 5, 1981

ORDERED:

That the Commissioner of Public Works be authorized to construct driveways over sidewalks in front of estates upon the streets as hereinafter named, the expense thereof to be charged to the appropriation for Public Works Department, Paving (Edgestones and Sidewalks). The entire cost of material and labor furnished to be repaid to the City by the owners of the abutting estates.

Susan Stokes Roberts

628 Green Street

Stacy John Thomas, Tr. of the
Beacon Hill Property Management

152 Pearl Street

1000 Massachusetts Avenue Phase 1
Associates

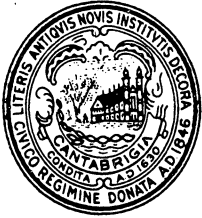
1000 Massachusetts Avenue

In City Council October 5, 1981.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of 8 members.
Attest:- Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

Paul E. Healy



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

September 21, 1981

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Enclosed for your consideration is a copy of a policy change recommendation on sidewalk construction submitted by the Public Works and Community Development departments.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

Agenda Item # 3

#6
H-135

Re: recommendation for policy change on
sidewalk construction as submitted by the
Public Works and Comm. Development Depts.

9/28/1981

for Order Adopted

#25 of 9/28/81

- Copy Enclosed -

In City Council,

September 21, 1981

9/21/81

Charter

Right

by

E. Vellucci

To Calendar for

9/28/81