



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300

FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

December 10, 1992

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: Richard C. Rossi *RCR*
Deputy City Manager

SUBJECT: 4 - 4 1/2 Centre Street

The Council has requested a hearing on 4 - 4 1/2 Centre Street. The Order expressed concern that the property might be a fire hazard. Based on two recent inspections by the Inspectional Services Department, the Department has determined that the building is secured and does not pose a fire hazard. A memo to that effect is attached.

The Council also asked about the future of the property. City Agencies can only provide the Council publicly with very little information about this property because it is the subject of several pending cases before different City Agencies and because there is pending Court litigation against the Historical Commission filed by the owner. The City Solicitor has advised this office that it would not be appropriate for the representatives of the Agencies to discuss the pending matters.

However, it is possible to provide the Council with some information about an ongoing process which I undertook at Mr. William's request to bring representatives of various City Agencies together to try to help Mr. Williams work out his problems with his building.

In June, Mr. Williams contacted me asking me if I could help him work out the conflicts between the various City Agencies. While I disputed his description of the nature of the conflicts, I offered to arrange a meeting with the representatives of the various City Agencies to see what could be done. In July, Mr. Williams and the representatives of the Rent Control Board, the Historical Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Community Development Department met in my office and agreed that Mr. Williams would work with them to try to develop a proposal that could be presented to each Agency and which the representatives felt they could recommend to their respective Agencies.

It was agreed that the proposal would be submitted for review in the pending Rent Control Board hearing on Mr. Williams removal permit application. After the analysis of the proposal was performed in that process, the proposal would be reviewed by the Rent Control Board. If the proposal was acceptable to the Rent Control Board, it could then be submitted to the other agencies for review.

The development of the proposal proceeded as outlined and the information has been provided to the Rent Control Board hearing examiner. Should the Rent Control Board accept the proposal, then Mr. Williams can present it to the remaining Boards. The proposal that was presented to the Rent Control Board is the one developed by the process that has the greatest chance of success because it requires the least relief from each Board. Other proposals that Mr. Williams develops could be presented to the Boards, but the attempt here was to find one which would have a reasonable likelihood of success. While the representatives of the various City Agencies cannot bind their Agencies, the recommendations of the representatives carry great weight with the Agencies.

Whether Mr. Williams will choose to continue to follow the process that was agreed to is unclear. The City has attempted to bring all the Regulatory Agencies together to work out a solution with Mr. Williams for his problem.

The correspondence between Mr. Williams and the City is voluminous. I have provided just a couple of letters which outline the approach the City has taken.

attachments



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

TO: Ellen Seminoff
Project Assistant

DATE: December 8, 1992

FROM: Ranjit Singanayagam *MS*
Zoning Specialist

SUBJECT: 4-4 1/2 Center Street
Cambridge, MA

The above referenced property was inspected on November 23, 1992 and December 7, 1992 and the following observations were made:

- 1). The building appeared to be fully secured and all windows were boarded with plywood.
- 2). Piece of plywood covering a basement window on the right side appeared to be coming off the frame. (Owner has been informed by phone to board it up properly).

In my opinion the building does not pose a threat to be of imminent danger or be a fire hazard.

RECEIVED
92 DEC -9 AM 11:52
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
INSPECTIONAL SERVICES

'92 JUN 19 AM 8 27

OFFICE OF THE
CITY ENGINEER

Joan Lastovica P.E.
City Engineer

Joseph J. Cellucci
Commissioner of Inspectional Services
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Board of Survey

4 - 4½ Centre Street

Dear Sir:

The above located building was inspected
on January 6, 1992 and found to be:

- ☒ a. A Fire Hazard
- ☒ b. Unfit for Human Habitation
- ☒ c. In Need of Major Repairs
- ☐ d. Structurally Unsafe
- ☐ e. Other Conditions

The repair of the building would be expensive, but is feasible and the Board recommends that the owner proceed with the repair.

Recommendation:

- ☒ a. Repair at once.
- ☒ b. Board-Up Until Repairs are made.
- ☐ c. Demolish
- ☐ d. Board-up until Demolished.
- ☒ e. Other Recommendations.

Repair roof leaks as soon as possible.

Reviewed and agreed to by:

Charles Sullivan
Executive Director
Historical Commission

Very truly yours,

Acting City Engineer for the Board of Survey
Fire Chief
Consulting Engineer



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300

FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

Deputy City Manager

July 13, 1992

Mr. Richard Williams
6 Ballord Place
Cambridge Ma, 02139

Dear Mr. Williams:

When we spoke, you expressed your frustration in your dealings with your property on 4 - 4 1/2 Centre Street. Although you note that it is conflicts between City Boards that have prevented you from moving forward with your property, I am not sure that any major conflicts would have existed had you proceeded with your initial plan to renovate the existing buildings.

My understanding is that you approached Terry Morris, Executive Director of the Rent Control Board who explored with you the possibility that under the Distressed Building Regulation you might be permitted to merge the existing 6 smaller units into 4 units, 3 of which would be removed from rent control and one of which would be dedicated as subsidized housing for low income persons. (That issue was never presented to the Rent Control Board so you do not actually have a decision that would allow the removals.)

Without returning to the Rent Control Board to ascertain whether a removal permit could be granted for demolition, you pursued with the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals plans for demolition and new construction which were rejected by the Mid Cambridge Conservation District Commission, whose decision was affirmed by the Cambridge Historical Commission. Had you pursued a renovation option rather than a demolition and new construction option, you were given reason to think that the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation Commission would not have opposed your plan.

No City agency or Board is currently encouraging or requiring you to demolish the buildings, and you have received indications from representatives of 2 city Boards that your renovation alternative could be well received. My understanding of why you have not pursued your renovation alternatives with the two City Agencies and with the Board of Zoning Appeals is your belief that the renovation plans are not economically viable even when you do not include your acquisition costs which you have indicated to the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission you are willing to exclude.

After the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission disapproved of your

demolition proposal by denying your applications for Certificates of Hardship and Appropriateness, you filed, on March 31, 1992, an application for removal permits with the Rent Control Board seeking demolition of the rent controlled units. I understand that one hearing has already been held in that case.

I would propose that the various City Agencies attempt to work with you through the existing removal permit case that you have filed to look at your renovation alternative. I realize that in that case you are proposing demolition, but in light of the rejection of your demolition alternative by the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission and the Historical Commission, it would be prudent to explore the renovation alternative.

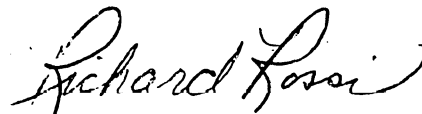
If you are interested, using this case, you can provide your detailed cost information to the Community Development Department Housing Director who will work with her staff to analyze your renovation plans and the cost information to help determine the economic feasibility of a renovation alternative. At the same time, representatives of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation Commission are prepared to review these renovation plans and advise you about what would likely be acceptable to the Commission. The zoning specialist from the Inspectional Services Department can also advise you as to any zoning relief you may need for the renovation alternative.

This information could be developed and presented in the context of the existing rent control removal permit process. It will require your willingness to provide the detailed plans and cost information, but it will enable you to have the various City Agencies working together in one process to help you work out a plan that would satisfy the requirements of each agency.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to proceed this way. I hope that you will choose to work with these agencies together to develop a plan that will allow preservation of both your building and some affordable housing.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Rossi".

Richard Rossi

cc: Director, Rent Control Board
Commissioner, Inspectional Services
Housing Director, Community Development Department
Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission
Board of Zoning Appeals
Mayor Reeves
Councillor Walsh



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300

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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

Deputy City Manager

November 25, 1992

Mr. Richard Williams
6 Ballord Place
Cambridge, Ma 02139

Dear Mr. Williams:

I have attempted over the last several months to assist you in finding a solution for your problems with your property at 4-4 1/2 Centre Street. You met in my office with representatives of the various Boards from which you are seeking relief for your property. This summer, you and the representatives of the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Rent Control Board and the Historical Commission agreed to develop the information about the possibility of an economically viable rehabilitation plan that could be recommended by the representatives to their respective Boards. That information was to be submitted to the hearing examiner in the existing removal permit case you have pending before the Rent Control Board. Based on the hearing examiner's report, the Rent Control Board would rule on your request for removal permits. The same information would be submitted to the Board of Zoning Appeals and to the Historical Commission where the staff was prepared to recommend granting your request for relief, provided it was consistent with the proposal agreeable to the representatives of all the agencies.

You need relief from all of the agencies because you want to remove some rent control units, you want to make modifications to the facade, and you need a zoning variance. Consistent with the process to which you agreed in my office, you and the Historical Commission representative prepared several possible renovation alternatives. The Community Development Department did a cost analysis of the alternative which required the smallest modification to the building. The conclusion of that analysis, as outlined in Ms. Schlesinger's letters to you, is that there is an economically viable rehabilitation plan.

Ms. Schlesinger's letters of November 24 and October 28 respond to your criticisms concerning her cost analysis and marketing assumptions. The cost numbers represent construction costs based on similar projects assuming the actual square footage of living space for your project, and the sales projections reflect very

conservative marketing projections.

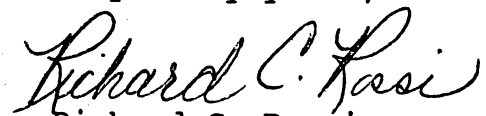
You also complain that all the possible alternatives were not costed out by Ms. Schlesinger. If you believe that there are other proposals that are as likely to be supported by representatives of the various agencies, you are free to propose them. What Ms. Schlesinger has done, along with the other representatives, is to determine that there is an economically viable alternative that is likely to meet the requirements of the different agencies. Other alternatives that might require more significant relief from City agencies were not pursued here. Our goal was to help you figure out whether there was an economically viable proposal to rehabilitate your property that could gain acceptance from the various City agencies from which you seek relief. That is what has been done.

I would suggest that you now let the process continue as was outlined when we first met. The information that you, the staff from the Historical Commission and staff from the Community Development Department have developed has been provided to the hearing examiner in your removal permit case. The hearing examiner will soon make recommendations to the Rent Control Board. If the Rent Control Board votes to grant you removal permits for the proposal outlined to the hearing examiner, then you can proceed to the Historical Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals. As you know, staff of that Commission and that Board have indicated that they will recommend approval of that proposal to their agencies. While no staff can guarantee that the Boards will accept their recommendations, the Boards generally respond to the recommendations of their staffs.

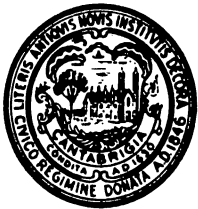
While you have complained consistently that the various City agencies are what keep you from rehabilitating your properties, that is just not true. The several City Agencies, through their staffs, been working with you for several months to help you reach resolution. If you cooperate with those City Agencies, you have a good change of getting relief that will allow you to rehabilitate your property.

I would ask you now to let the process you asked for come to its conclusion. If you fail to do so, then that will be the reason that the agencies do not resolve your problems with 4-4 1/2 Centre Street.

Very truly yours,


Richard C. Rossi

cc: Director, Rent Control Board
Commissioner, Inspectional Services
Housing Director, Community Development Department
Director, Historical Commission



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300
FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

December 14, 1992

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to the Council's request for information for the Monday night hearing, regarding the property located at 4 - 4 1/2 Centre Street, please find attached a report received from Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager, relative to this matter. This report also responds to Awaiting Report Item No. 31.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over the typed name.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachments

CONSENT AGENDA ITEM #15

Awaiting Report Item No. 31 regarding
a request by the Council for information
for the Monday night hearing on the
property located at 4-4½ Centre Street.

In City Council,

December 14, 1992

*Referred to the
hearing.*

RICHARD WILLIAMS

RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

1992 DEC 11 PM 4:29

CAMBRIDGE MA.

6 Ballord Place
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 491-2315

December 11, 1992

Margaret Drury
City Clerk
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Ms. Drury:

I understand that a City Council hearing has been scheduled for Monday December 14 concerning the properties at 4 and 4½ Centre Street.

I have been working with Deputy City Manager Rossi and other members of the city administration for many weeks trying to resolve the complex problems associated with the buildings. There are some steps underway at this moment that, I believe, have the potential for substantial progress towards a solution.

I am concerned that if the hearing is held on Monday, I and others will be forced to focus on the problems and unresolved issues. If the hearing is postponed for a very short period, I believe there is a reasonable possibility that we can come to the Council to report on an agreement as to how I and the city boards will proceed with the properties.

Several of the Councilors have been very helpful in trying to end the impasse that has left these buildings as a danger in the neighborhood. I welcome the Council's interest in status of the properties. However, I believe the consultations now underway with the boards can reach an agreement that everyone can support. A report to the Council of agreement will be far preferable to a finger pointing session that might make a subsequent agreement more difficult.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Council postpone the hearing perhaps until January 4. I will not be here on December 28. If I can answer any questions, please call me at 576-6557.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Richard Williams

cc: Richard Rossi
Counselor Walsh



City of Cambridge

9.

IN CITY COUNCIL

November 23, 1992

COUNCILLOR WALSH

WHEREAS: Many residents of Dana Street, Hancock Street and Centre Street are fearful that a certain abandoned premises located 4-4 1/2 Centre Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, may be broken into by vagrants and/or children and as a result, may become a potential fire hazard in a congested neighborhood; and

WHEREAS: This property has continued to deteriorate over the last several years; and

WHEREAS: The owner, Richard Williams, has on several occasions communicated to neighborhood residents and several City Councillors that it has been his intention to resolve this problem; and

WHEREAS: It has recently been reported that this property is in serious tax arrearage; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the owner of this property, the City Manager, the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, Community Development and all other relevant agencies be invited to attend a hearing at the Cambridge city Council on December 14, 1992 for a public hearing to discuss the future of this property and that prior to this hearing, the City Manager give the City Council a full written report as to the status of the property including reports from the various agencies involved.

In City Council November 23, 1992.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

(617) 349-4260

FAX (617) 349-4307

D. MARGARET DRURY
CITY CLERK

JOHN E. FLYNN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK

December 10, 1992

TO: **ROBERT W. HEALY, CITY MANAGER**
RICHARD ROSSI, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
SUSAN SCHLESINGER, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPT.
CHARLES SULLIVAN, HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TERRENCE MORRIS, RENT CONTROL
JOSEPH CELLUCCI, INSPECTIONAL SERVICES
COMMISSIONER

FROM: **D. MARGARET DRURY** *DMD*
CITY CLERK

SUBJECT: **HEARING ON THE ABANDONED PREMISES AT 4 - 4 1/2**
CENTRE STREET

Please be advised that the City Council has scheduled a public hearing for Monday, December 14, 1992 at 7:00 p. m., in the Sullivan Chamber, City Hall, pursuant to an order submitted by Councillor William Walsh, relative to the abandoned premises located at 4 - 4 1/2 Centre Street.

You have been requested to attend this hearing to discuss the future of this property.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

(617) 349-4260

FAX (617) 349-4307

D. MARGARET DRURY
CITY CLERK

JOHN E. FLYNN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK

December 10, 1992

Mr. Richard Williams
6 Ballard Place
Cambridge, MA 02139

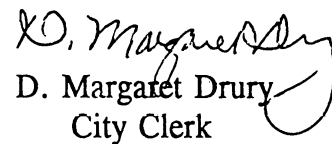
Dear Mr. Williams:

Please be advised that the Cambridge City Council has scheduled a public hearing for Monday, December 14, 1992 at 7:00 p. m. in the Sullivan Chamber, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, pursuant to the order submitted by Councillor William Walsh, a copy of which is attached for your information, relative to the abandoned premises located at 4 - 4 1/2 Centre Street.

You have been requested to attend this meeting at this time and be heard.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Very truly yours,


D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



City of Cambridge

9.

IN CITY COUNCIL

November 23, 1992

COUNCILLOR WALSH

WHEREAS: Many residents of Dana Street, Hancock Street and Centre Street are fearful that a certain abandoned premises located 4-4 1/2 Centre Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, may be broken into by vagrants and/or children and as a result, may become a potential fire hazard in a congested neighborhood; and

WHEREAS: This property has continued to deteriorate over the last several years; and

WHEREAS: The owner, Richard Williams, has on several occasions communicated to neighborhood residents and several City Councillors that it has been his intention to resolve this problem; and

WHEREAS: It has recently been reported that this property is in serious tax arrearage; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the owner of this property, the City Manager, the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, Community Development and all other relevant agencies be invited to attend a hearing at the Cambridge city Council on December 14, 1992 for a public hearing to discuss the future of this property and that prior to this hearing, the City Manager give the City Council a full written report as to the status of the property including reports from the various agencies involved.

In City Council November 23, 1992.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



City of Cambridge

9.

IN CITY COUNCIL

November 23, 1992

COUNCILLOR WALSH

WHEREAS: Many residents of Dana Street, Hancock Street and Centre Street are fearful that a certain abandoned premises located 4-4 1/2 Centre Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, may be broken into by vagrants and/or children and as a result, may become a potential fire hazard in a congested neighborhood; and

WHEREAS: This property has continued to deteriorate over the last several years; and

WHEREAS: The owner, Richard Williams, has on several occasions communicated to neighborhood residents and several City Councillors that it has been his intention to resolve this problem; and

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RESOLVED: That the owner of this property, the City Manager, the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, Community Development and all other relevant agencies be invited to attend a hearing at the Cambridge city Council on December 14, 1992 for a public hearing to discuss the future of this property and that prior to this hearing, the City Manager give the City Council a full written report as to the status of the property including reports from the various agencies involved.

In City Council November 23, 1992.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



City of Cambridge

9.C.
IN CITY COUNCIL

November 17, 1992

COUNCILLOR WALSH

WHEREAS, many residents of Dana Street, Hancock Street and Centre Street are fearful that a certain abandoned premises located at 4-4 1/2 Centre Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, may be broken into by vagrants and/or children and as a result, may become a potential fire hazard in a congested neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, this property has continued to deteriorate over the last several years; and

WHEREAS, the owner Richard Williams has on several occasions communicated to neighborhood residents and several city councillors that it has been his intention to resolve this problem; and

WHEREAS, it has recently been reported that this property is in serious tax arrearage.

RESOLVED, that the owner of this property, the City Manager, the Commissioner of the Building Department, Community Development and all other relevant agencies be invited to attend a hearing at the Cambridge City Council on December 7, 1992 for a public hearing to discuss the future of this property and that prior to this hearing, the City Manager give the Council a full written report as to the status of the property including reports from the various agencies involved.



City of Cambridge

9.

IN CITY COUNCIL

November 23, 1992

COUNCILLOR WALSH

WHEREAS: Many residents of Dana Street, Hancock Street and Centre Street are fearful that a certain abandoned premises located 4-4 1/2 Centre Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, may be broken into by vagrants and/or children and as a result, may become a potential fire hazard in a congested neighborhood; and

WHEREAS: This property has continued to deteriorate over the last several years; and

WHEREAS: The owner, Richard Williams, has on several occasions communicated to neighborhood residents and several City Councillors that it has been his intention to resolve this problem; and

WHEREAS: It has recently been reported that this property is in serious tax arrearage; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the owner of this property, the City Manager, the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, Community Development and all other relevant agencies be invited to attend a hearing at the Cambridge city Council on December 14, 1992 for a public hearing to discuss the future of this property and that prior to this hearing, the City Manager give the City Council a full written report as to the status of the property including reports from the various agencies involved.

NOV. 23 1992
 City Council
 Adopted by the affirmative vote
 of 8 members

Margaret Drury, Clerk

Consent Order # 9

F54B

Councillor Walsh re: abandoned premises
located at 4 4½ Centre Street.

In City Council,

November 23, 1992

Order Adopted
Hearing scheduled for
Dec. 14, 1992 at 700PM
12/14/92 - Hearing Cancelled.