



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER
*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

BETH RUBENSTEIN
*Deputy Director for
Community Development*

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Susan Schlesinger, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: June 15, 1998

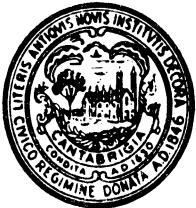
RE: City Council Order #55 (June 1, 1998)

The above referenced order requests a review of the mechanisms by which greater control might be achieved with regard to the visual impact of mechanical equipment on the roofs of buildings. Concern about the issue is related to the fact that currently most mechanical equipment is exempt from the height limits imposed in all zoning districts, and the visual character is not regulated in any way.

Because such equipment is not within the height limits imposed in zoning districts, and because the actual dimensions of the equipment needed frequently are not determined until the design of a building's other features are well advanced, the character and impact of mechanical equipment is often inadequately assessed, even for those buildings now subject to advisory or required design review. Where no design review is required, which is often the case for even large construction projects, the concern is not addressed at all.

By the nature of the research activities that occur in Cambridge, the range of mechanical equipment and devices found on building roofs is extensive. Any new approaches to regulating such equipment, from instituting screening requirements to inclusion of some or all of such features within height limits imposed in zoning, have potential implications that need careful review.

Before making recommendations for alteration to the zoning ordinance on these matters, a review of the current range of practices in other communities is advisable, particularly in those communities that share with Cambridge a similar type of construction activity. It would also be helpful to achieve an understanding of the range of equipment in current use and its operational requirements. The Department will undertake such a review with assistance from other city departments, potentially affected property owners and firms, and the community, and will develop appropriate recommendations for amendments to the zoning ordinance and alteration in the procedures by which the design of buildings is undertaken.



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

June 22, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 13, regarding the review of the mechanisms by which greater control might be achieved with regard to the visual impact of mechanical equipment on the roofs of buildings, received from Assistant City Manager for Community Development Susan Schlesinger.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #6

453-8

Relative to the review of the mechanisms by which greater control might be achieved with regard to the visual impact of mechanical equipment on the roofs of buildings.

In City Council June 22, 1998

PLACED ON FILE