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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

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November 17, 2003

To the Honorable, the City Council:

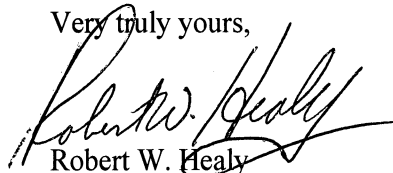
In response to Awaiting Report Item Number 03-128, regarding a report on why laundromats are closing and what can be done to retain or attract them, Assistant City Manager for Community Development Department Beth Rubenstein reports the following:

The Community Development Department's Economic Development Division (EDD) has identified 46 laundry/dry cleaning establishments in Cambridge, and confirmed that 16 of these businesses offer self-service, coin-operated laundry facilities. While most of the city's highest density neighborhoods are located within a half mile of at least one coin-op facility, four such businesses have recently closed.

Local coin-op laundry owners have reported that demand for this service remains strong, but high real estate values create pressure on their businesses, making it difficult to rent sufficient space to accommodate a marketable facility. Dry cleaning and other "drop-off" services provide a higher profit margin within less space than a self-service, coin-operated laundry. Additional challenges to operators of coin-operated laundries include a high initial capital investment, long hours of operation to accommodate customers' needs, and the staffing required to maintain cleanliness and safety of the facility as well as proper functioning of equipment. In instances where coin-op facilities have closed or plan to close in Cambridge, property owners have chosen not to renew existing lease terms in favor of a different type of business for the space.

EDD will continue to help coin-op laundry owners establish and maintain their businesses in Cambridge by providing targeted small business assistance, including individual counseling and inclusion in the Façade Improvement and Best Retail Practices programs. Staff will also work to attract new facilities to underserved areas of the City by helping to match appropriate vacant retail space with interested entrepreneurs.

Very truly yours,


Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec

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Consent Agenda #17

Transmitting communication from Robert W. Healy, City Manager, relative to **Awaiting Report Item Number 03-128**, regarding a report on why laundromats are closing and what can be done to retain or attract them.

In City Council November 17, 2003

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