

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

Robert G. Neiley
Chairman

William B. King
Vice Chairman

Dwight H. Andrews
Arthur H. Brooks, Jr.
James F. Clapp, Jr.
Charles W. Eliot, 2d

Hugh M. Lyons
Mrs. Charles M. Pierce
Joseph G. Sakey
Alternates

May 14, 1975

To The Honorable, The City Council:

On April 22nd, members of the City Council requested that I transmit the position of the Historical Commission concerning the future of two East Cambridge structures, the Old Superior Courthouse of Middlesex County and the Putnam School.

It is the position of the Historical Commission that the continued existence of these two structures is essential. The Old Courthouse is a landmark of much more than local importance, and both it and the Putnam School are necessary to the continued health and character of East Cambridge as a residential neighborhood. Both the Courthouse and the School have been adjudged eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, a designation conferred by the National Park Service only on structures of great importance.

Demolition of either building would be a blow to the continued stability of East Cambridge. The Courthouse will, in time, constitute a buffer between high density development of the Lechmere Canal area and the existing residential neighborhood, while removal of the School for a parking lot would introduce a blighting influence into a community which has found increased stability in recent years. It is ironic that a community which has so recently asked the Historical Commission to study the possibility of its becoming an Historic District should be faced so quickly with proposals of such potential damage.

The Historical Commission, however, does not propose that either building be preserved for the sake of preservation alone; both must find an economic use. Middlesex County is presently conducting a feasibility study for reuse of their building by a commercial lessor, while schools similar to the Putnam have been successfully reused for housing. We believe that if the City took a position of leadership in this matter that both buildings could be recycled and East Cambridge appreciably enhanced.

To the City Council

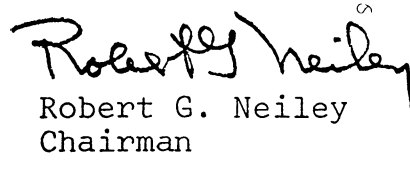
- 2 -

May 14, 1975

It is clear that the key problem in both cases is parking. However, we believe that the addition of 45 spaces on the Putnam School site would be a serious detriment to the residential community and would not contribute appreciably to a solution. The demand for parking in East Cambridge comes from a wide variety of sources, and only a solution which involves the community, the County, East Cambridge businesses, the MBTA, and the Museum of Science makes sense. We propose that the City take the leadership in finding such a solution rather than engage in such a destructive stopgap.

We are pleased to be able to address the City Council on such an issue. If we may be of any further assistance in resolving this important question, please do not hesitate to call me or the Commission's Executive Director, Charles Sullivan, at City Hall on Extension 346.

Yours,


Robert G. Neiley
Chairman

RGN/dl



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 876-6800

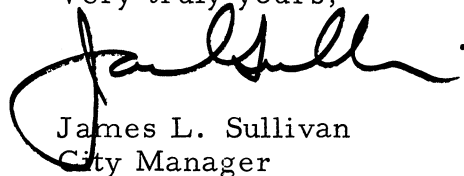
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
JAMES L. SULLIVAN
City Manager

May 19, 1975

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I transmit herewith a communication from Robert G. Neiley, Chairman of the Cambridge Historical Commission, relative to the position of the Historical Commission concerning the future of the Old Superior Courthouse of Middlesex County and the Putnam School.

Very truly yours,



James L. Sullivan
City Manager

JLS/mbf
Enc.

Agenda # 3

209

Report on the future of the Old Superior
Court house of Middlesex County and the
Putnam School.

In City Council,

May 19, 1975

Placed on file