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City of Cambridge

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

*Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair
Councillor Anthony Galluccio
Councillor Brian Murphy*

In City Council October 28, 2002

The Health and Environment Committee conducted a public meeting on Wednesday, October 2, 2002 at 6:05 P.M. in the Ackermann Room. The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussion on the implementation of a plan for the establishment of public toilet facilities.

Present at the meeting were Vice-Mayor Henrietta Davis, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Brian Murphy, Lisa Peterson, Public Works Commissioner, Harold Cox, Chief Public Health Officer, Suzy Feinberg, Communications Specialist, Cambridge Public Health Department, Kerry Dunnell, Intern, Cambridge Public Health Department, Nancy Glowa, First Assistant City Solicitor, Cambridge Law Department, Les Barber, Community Development Department, Garrett Simonsen, Mayor's Office, and Elaine McGrath, City Clerk's office.

Councillor Davis opened the meeting and stated the purpose, which was to follow up on issues raised in previous committee meetings, especially the possibility of better signage about existing toilet facilities. She asked Mr. Cox to report on the information he had gathered since the July 25, 2002 committee meeting.

Mr. Cox offered a document containing a list of Publicly Available Bathrooms willing to have signage and A Short List of Public Restrooms in Cambridge (**Attachment A**). The publicly available bathrooms that are willing to have signage are the 51 and 57 Inman Street municipal buildings, City Hall, and Danehy Park; the Public Health Department is negotiating signage with the Multi-Service Center in Central Square. He noted that this list was similar to a previous list because public officials continue to be concerned about their ability to handle the increased traffic they believe would result from more signs. The Fire Department, for example, is concerned about increased maintenance costs and about demand, especially after 10 P.M. when the firefighters are asleep. They do not turn people down who come to firehouses now, even when they are asleep, but they do not want to encourage this behavior. According to Mr. Cox, most of the private businesses are vehemently against signage. Holyoke Center in Harvard Square is willing to consider more signage if they have control over the size and language of any signs. The Central Square Business Association confirmed the concerns that have been raised about security and maintenance costs. Businesses acknowledge the need but state that they cannot post signs. So far, the indication is that there are 3 to 5 locations willing to post signs. Given this limited response, Mr. Cox suggests that it may be worthwhile to pursue Automatic Public Toilets (APTs) as an option.

The groups then discussed several other possible sites. In response to Councillor Murphy's question about the public golf course as a possible site, Ms. Feinberg stated that it may be an option. Ms. Peterson noted that this site would only be open during the day and during the golf season. Regarding the Water Department facility at Fresh Pond, Vice-Mayor Davis stated that it was built to accommodate public access. Mr. Cox stated that there had been security issues about access to the water plant, but that they had been solved with a door barring access to that part of the plant. According to Ms. Dunnell, the plant will accommodate people who need to use

the bathrooms but would rather not provide signs. Regarding the municipal building at 119 Windsor St., Mr. Cox said that the concern about signs was the ability to keep the building clean with increased traffic. The city hospital as a public building already serves a large homeless population. Ms. Peterson noted that the MDC allows people to use their facilities, but might not be willing to advertise them. Regarding houses of worship, Vice-Mayor Davis stated that there had been problems with vandalism when they opened their facilities. The Department of Public Health has not investigated them as an option. Vice-Mayor Davis suggested the possibility of a quid pro quo, in which the city would assist places of worship to become handicapped accessible in exchange for opening their toilets to the public. According to Ms. Glowa, this might also be an incentive for other non-profits. Ms. Peterson pointed out that there are both interior and exterior requirements to gain handicap-accessible status, and that the city would need to specify what it was offering. For ideas about possible facilities in Harvard Square, Councillor Murphy asked if this was a question to refer to the Harvard Square Design Advisory Committee. In Central Square, Vice-Mayor Davis suggested that the Salvation Army and CASPAR might serve as resources; even though they are not public facilities, they are accommodating homeless people now.

Vice-Mayor Davis acknowledged the concerns about providing signs for public and private bathrooms. At the same time, she pointed out that the demand currently exists and that the public already uses facilities. Increasing signage and identifying more sites could spread out the demand and lessen the impact on the most heavily-used facilities.

Ms. Glowa asked if providing signs would suggest to visitors that a facility was larger than it is; this could be a real burden with groups like bus tours. Ms. Dunnell responded that, in her conversations with tourist offices, staff stated that they do not make official recommendations. Tour groups have to provide facilities or search for them on their own.

Regarding APTs, Vice-Mayor Davis directed Mr. Cox to compare the costs of APTs to storefront rentals and renovation as part of the report he is preparing. Addressing the amount of advertising necessary to fund APTs at low or no cost to the city, Ms. Feinberg and Ms. Dunnell stated that the amount of advertising allowed depends on the exposure at different sites. They have requested the formulas that the street furniture companies use to calculate this amount, but the companies have not been willing to disclose them. Vice-Mayor Davis noted that Cambridge has a history of fighting billboards, which may be inconsistent with certain forms of advertising for APTs. According to Ms. Feinberg, the city can control the types of ads, for example, prohibiting smoking ads. Mr. Barber also noted that the city has regulations about signs on private property but not on the public way.

The group then discussed some options for investigating the amount of advertising that the city would have to permit to offset the costs of APTs, including issuing a request for proposals (RFP), soliciting estimates through newspapers, and sending a letter of interest to the street furniture companies that manufacture APTS. The group discussed the implications of issuing an RFP to gather information. Both Ms. Peterson and Ms. Glowa cautioned against using RFPs just for information. The city could be criticized for not acting in good faith, since bidders incur costs to prepare bids and expect that a contract will be issued; not selecting a bid could also hurt the city in future solicitations. As for a letter of interest to APT manufacturers, Mr. Cox pointed out that the city invited the four APT manufacturers to discuss estimates in preparation for the initial report on APTS; two responded. However, they were unwilling to disclose their formula for offsetting costs by advertising and stated that their preference was for the city to issue a RFP, and that then they would discuss costs.

In response to Mr. Yarden's comment that the Burns Playground, if renovated, may have a public toilet, Ms. Peterson reported that the city had studied the feasibility of opening the Burns site 10 years ago; the cost estimates then were \$750,000. The DPW is currently compiling estimates for the City Council for this renovation. Ms. Peterson stated that the city was planning to construct a free-standing toilet at Russell Field. However, it is unclear if this facility would be open when there are no games scheduled at the field.

Vice-Mayor Davis noted the efforts that have been made to gather information over a year and a half; to make progress on the issue of public toilets, she asked Mr. Cox to identify two locations, one each in Harvard and Central Squares, that could accommodate APTS.

Vice-Mayor Davis thanked all who attended the meeting.

On Councillor Murphy's motion, the meeting adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Davis', written over a horizontal line.

Vice Mayor Henrietta Davis, Chair

Publicly Available Bathrooms willing to have signage

Organization	Address	Neighborhood	Hours
51/57 Inman – municipal building	51/57 Inman	CENTRAL SQUARE	7:00 a.m.-8 p.m., later on meeting nights
City Hall	795 Mass. Avenue	CENTRAL SQUARE	8:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; later on meeting nights
Danehy Park	99 Sherman Street	NORTH CAMBRIDGE/ ALEWIFE	Permanent restrooms: 7 a.m. to dusk, year-round Temporary toilets: 24/7
*Multi-Service Center	19 Brookline Street	CENTRAL SQUARE	8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
**Holyoke Center	1350 Mass. Avenue	Harvard Square	Mon- Fri 6:30 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Sat, Sun & Holidays 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Source: Cambridge Public Health Department

* Pending approval

** Harvard Real Estate and Planning reserves the right to approve the size of the sign as well as the language on the sign.

A Short List of Public Restrooms in Cambridge

Organization	Address	Neighborhood	Hours
Firehouse – North Cambridge	2029 Mass. Avenue	NORTH CAMBRIDGE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – O'Neill Branch	70 Rindge Avenue	NORTH CAMBRIDGE	9am-8pm –M, W, Th 9am-5:30 pm – T, F
* Danehy Park	99 Sherman Street	NORTH CAMBRIDGE/ ALEWIFE	Permanent restrooms: 7 a.m. to dusk, year-round Temporary toilets: 24/7
Firehouse – Taylor Sq.	113 Garden	TAYLOR SQUARE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Golf Course Club House	691 Huron Ave.	WEST CAMBRIDGE	Dawn to dusk
Library – Collins Branch	64 Aberdeen Ave.	WEST CAMBRIDGE	M, Th: 1 pm-8 pm T, W, F: 9 am-5:30 pm
Firehouse –West Cambridge	167 Lexington Ave.	WEST CAMBRIDGE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – Main	449 Broadway	MID CAMBRIDGE/ HARVARD SQUARE	Monday-Friday: 9am-9pm Sat: 9am-5pm Sun: 1pm-5pm (Sept-May)
Firehouse – Main	491 Broadway	MID CAMBRIDGE/ HARVARD SQUARE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – Central Sq.	45 Pearl St.	CENTRAL SQUARE	M, W, F: 9:30 am-6 pm T & Th: 9:30 am-9 pm S 9:30am-6pm (Sep-Jun)
Firehouse – Lafayette Square	378 Mass. Avenue	CENTRAL SQUARE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
* City Hall	795 Mass. Avenue	CENTRAL SQUARE	8:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; later on meeting nights
Citywide Senior Center	806 Mass. Avenue	CENTRAL SQUARE	8:30 a.m.-4:50 p.m., M-F; 8:30 a.m.-12:50 p.m., S-S
Building Department	831 Mass. Avenue	CENTRAL SQUARE	Regular hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Hearing nights: 6 pm-10 pm
Multi-Service Center	19 Brookline Street	CENTRAL SQUARE	8:30 a.m.– 5 p.m.
Windsor Street Health Center	119 Windsor Street	CENTRAL/KENDALL	7 am-11 p.m., M-F; 10 am-2 p.m., Sat.
Firehouse – South Side	176 River Street	SOUTH SIDE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Water Department	250 Fresh Pond Parkway		

Source: Cambridge Public Health Department

Organization	Address	Neighborhood	Hours
Magazine Pool	719 Memorial Drive	CHARLES RIVER	M-F: 11 am – 7 pm S-S: 10 am – 6 pm *Open in July & August:
* 51/57 Inman – municipal building	57 Inman	CENTRAL SQUARE	7 a.m.-8 p.m., later on meeting nights
Firehouse – Inman Sq.	1384 Cambridge St.	INMAN SQUARE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
The Cambridge Hospital	1493 Cambridge Street	INMAN SQUARE	Reception area: 6 am.-8 pm ED restrooms: 24/7
Library – Valente Branch	826 Cambridge Street	INMAN/ EAST CAMBRIDGE	M, Th, F: 10 am-6 pm T, W: 10 am-8 pm
Firehouse – East Cambridge	175 Cambridge Street	EAST CAMBRIDGE	6 am – midnight, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – O'Connell Branch	48 Sixth Street	EAST CAMBRIDGE	M, W, Th: 10 am-5 pm Tues: 10 pm-7:30 pm Friday: 1pm-5pm

Source: Cambridge Public Health Department

S-311

Committee Report #7

Committee R report from Vice Mayor Davis, Chair of the Health and Environment Committee, for a meeting held on October 2, 2002 to continue discussion on the implementation of a plan for the establishment of public toilet facilities.

In City Council October 28, 2002

**REPORT ACCEPTED.
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