



City of Cambridge

36.

IN CITY COUNCIL

August 3, 1992

COUNCILLOR WALSH
MAYOR REEVES

WHEREAS: A degree of correspondence and communication have been received by this Council's membership from neighborhood residents regarding plans and sites for the proposed new Agassiz School. The core concerns of same are synthesized in the attached 7/9/92 letter from Attorney John H. Cunha, Jr., 8 Sacramento Street; and

WHEREAS: A strong spirit of discontent exists among residents of the Agassiz neighborhood not only regarding the building structure but also the seriousness with which the neighborhood's views are being weighed in the building of consensus so as to assure that when a final decision is made, we will have both a high quality educational facility at the Agassiz School and, at the same time, preserve the high quality of life in the neighborhood which abuts the school; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That it is the sense of this Council that the City Manager, when he appoints the members of the School Building committee for the Agassiz School, take great pains to assure optimal quality and quantity presence by Agassiz Neighborhood residents so that thorough consultation and not notification will pervade the process by which the committee will make its recommendations. Further, that, when and as members are appointed to the School Building Committee for the Agassiz School, the City Manager provide this Council with the names and addresses of the committee members.

In City Council August 3, 1992.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, Temporary City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
Temporary City Clerk

VICE MAYOR CYR RECORDED IN THE NEGATIVE ON THIS MATTER.

Salsberg & Cunha

Attorneys at law ■

John Salsberg
John H. Cunha Jr.
Helen Holcomb

July 9, 1992

20 Winthrop Square
Boston MA 02110-1202
Tel: (617) 338-1590
Fax: (617) 338-2160

Robert W. Healy
City Manager
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: Proposed Agassiz School

Dear Mr. Healy:

I am writing as a resident at 8 Sacramento Street. As you know, a special meeting of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council was held on June 30, 1992, at which city and school officials and the architect described some aspects of the four proposed sites.

Many residents voiced outrage that after the neighborhood objected strongly in September 1991 to a large school, each "new" proposal presented a large school as a fait accompli. City officials, particularly School Committee member Larry Weinstein, bluntly stated that if one of the four proposals was not accepted, the school would eventually be lost to the area. That the neighborhood was being told by the city that it is "my way or the highway" was reinforced in that the only option presented which requested more study, ("F"), by its own terms accepted the sites themselves; several residents stated that they could not vote for Option F because they did not accept the proposed sites.

Many ballots were submitted prior to the meeting, others during the meeting, and the remainder at the conclusion of the meeting, at which time the voting was closed. The voting results, as posted at the Community Center, are as follows:

A) The first choices:

1. G (smaller school, sites unaccepted)	132	39.3%
2. B (Guidance Center site)	74	22.0%
3. C (Lesley College site)	61	18.2%
4. A (Agassiz extended site)	38	11.3%
5. D (Garfield St. site)	14	4.1%
6. F (all sites need more study)	10	3.0%
7. E (move school out of neighborhood)	7	2.1%

B) A weighted score, assigning 7 to the first choice, 6 to a second choice, etc.:

1. G (smaller school, sites unacceptable)	953	21.1%
2. B (Guidance Center site)	856	18.9%
3. C (Lesley College site)	825	18.2%
4. A (Agassiz extended site)	806	17.8%
5. D (Garfield St. site)	490	10.8%
6. F (all sites need more study)	330	7.3%
7. E (move school out of neighborhood)	267	5.9%

C) Every listed site was unacceptable to the voters, with unacceptable totals ranging from 59.2% to 74.1% for the four sites.

A strong plurality (39.3%) opposed any building of the proposed size, on any of the sites. The real number of residents who hold such a view is probably larger, as Option G wasn't on the ballot; it was a write-in (it was only at the meeting that it was agreed that Option G votes would be counted). Many voters were unaware of this option, while others who voted prior to the meeting were unsure that such a choice would be counted. If the Option F votes, for more study, are added to Option G, 42.3% rejected all four plans, almost double the vote for the second choice.

Further studies will not ameliorate difficulties with a large building. The question is rather how can the school department achieve the number of classrooms it desires while satisfying the community mandate for a smaller structure?

Many of the people who argued for a small school suggested that a dual-site K-8 was an acceptable alternative. Keeping a building on the present site (either renovated or new, but no larger than the existing Agassiz School) plus a second smaller building on another street would work well from a neighborhood standpoint.

The most logical site would be one of the corners across from the school, i.e., Wendell and Oxford or Sacramento and Oxford Streets; two reasonably sized buildings would be separate, yet contiguous, and could be joined physically by a tunnel, which could also include usable space. Community opposition to a similar proposal last fall centered on two issues:

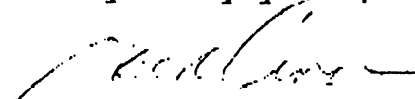
- 1) neighborhood loss of the Tot Lot now located at Sacramento and Oxford Streets, and
- 2) the proposed link was an enclosed bridge spanning the street, rather than tunnelling under it.

Robert W. Healy
July 9, 1992
Page 3

As a parent with three children age six and under, I share the concern of those who fear loss of the Tot Lot. However, if, as site A proposes, a house could be moved behind the Community Center at 20 Sacramento Street, then certainly a Tot Lot could be accommodated there, or elsewhere nearby.

Residents can be brought together around two smaller school buildings, rather than bitterly divided in a manner alien to our neighborhood. I believe this proposal would receive wide support and request that the city investigate such a plan.

Very truly yours,



John H. Cunha Jr.

cc: Mayor Kenneth Reeves, Vice-Mayor Edward N. Cyr, Frank Duehay, Jonathan S. Myers, Sheila Russell, Walter Sullivan, Timothy Toomey, William Walsh, Alice Wolf, Henrietta Davis, David P. Maher, Alfred B. Santini, James J. Rafferty, E. Denise Simmons, Larry Weinstein, Cambridge Chronicle, Agassiz Neighborhood Council

JHC/lps



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Councillor Walsh

August 3, 1992

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(ATTACHMENT)

Salsberg & Cunha

Attorneys at Law ■

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July 9, 1992

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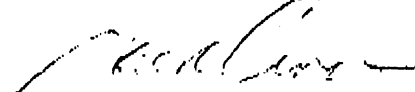
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JHC/lps



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

(617) 498-9094

William H. Walsh
City Councillor

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL FORM:

DATE: Monday, July 20, 1992

FROM: Personal Office of Councillor William H. Walsh
Athenacum House
215 First Street
Cambridge, MA. 02142
TELEPHONE: 617 354-3366
FAX NUMBER: 617 876-9331

TO: Office of the City Clerk
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA. 02139
(Kindness of City Manager's Staff)

ATTENTION: MS. Donna Lopez

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES, INCLUDING THIS PAGE: 5

If you do not receive the number of pages as indicated above,
please telephone immediately.

REMARKS: Councillor Walsh requests that the enclosed SENSE OF THE
COUNCIL Resolution regarding the Agassiz School be included
in the CONSENT AGENDA for the Council Session scheduled for
Monday, August 3, 1992.

Signature of person in Councillor Walsh's office transmitting
the document(s).

Your customary courtesy & cooperation in responding to this
request are appreciated.

David F. Noonan

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David F. Noonan", written over a horizontal line.



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M. Reeves
CONSENT ORDER #36 *F-376*
Councillor Walsh re: Agassiz School.

In City Council,

August 3, 1992

*Order adopted
by 8 members
Vice Mayor Cyr recorded
in the negative.*