



City of Cambridge

O-19.

IN CITY COUNCIL

June 25, 2001

COUNCILLOR BRAUDE

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to move the funds which have been held in reserve during the City Council discussion into the FY02 General Fund for the new position in the new office for Citizen Information and Services.

In City Council June 25, 2001.

Adopted by a ye and nay vote:-

Yeas 7; Nays 0; Absent 2.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

SEE COMMITTEE REPORTS #1 & #2

Vice Mayor Maher said he is having a problem understanding the proposal. It apparently contemplates one position. He does not see how one person can staff the whole operation, but using all volunteers for the information function is not realistic. He does not want to end up with another information booth like the one at Harvard Square - something that looks terrific and never has anyone in it. It is impossible for one person to do this; there would have to be a staff.

Ms. Peterson said that she agrees. The proposal starts with one funded position, one new person. For answering the phones, the front line persons are still Diane Squires and Mary Ellen Carvello.

Councillor Braude said that the first person hired, the "director," will not be the front line "greeter." That person will coordinate all of these activities.

Councillor Davis said that it is very important that the position is filled by a person who actually talks to people. Ms. Peterson said that she sees the person spending 50% of his/her time assisting residents.

Mr. Healy said that he agrees with the need of professional appearance for whatever space is utilized.

Vice Mayor Maher said that he believes that relying on volunteers could be a mistake. You cannot fire a volunteer, but volunteers can be much more difficult to manage.

Councillor Sullivan said that there are a variety of gatekeepers who, within their own offices, direct calls and answer questions.

Councillor Davis asked if this proposal would respond in some way to her order to look into access for the public to the Hansen system. Ms. Peterson responded in the affirmative.

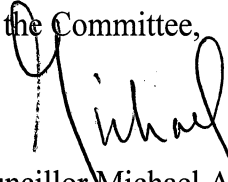
The question of extended hours for city services was then discussed. Councillor Braude noted that this was a question on the citizen survey and he believes that many residents were in favor of some sort of extended service. It makes a very positive statement about the City and its commitment to serving its residents, just as having a person to answer questions in the lobby of City Hall does. He suggested trying extended hours with one department as an experiment. Ms. Peterson said that the Inspectional Services Department is opening earlier for the issuance of permits.

Councillor Sullivan noted the enhancements for volunteer services - jackets and lunch. Five hundred dollars is the limit on tax credits which does not go very far. This plan provides some additional incentive for continued volunteer participation.

Councillor Sullivan moved that the matter be referred to the full City Council. The motion passed on a voice vote without objection.

Councillor Sullivan thanked those present for their attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 P.M.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael", written over a horizontal line.

Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

May 29, 2001

To the City Council Finance and Government Operations Committees:

As a result of a meeting between the Chairs of the Finance and Government Operations Committees of the City Council, I would like to present a refined proposal for the *Cambridge Information Center: 349-INFO*. As you know, \$64,004 is included in the FY02 Budget in the Reserve Fund for a position to run this office.

In 2000, the City Council adopted as one of its goals: *Improve and simplify public access to City services and provide more and better opportunities for the public to participate in governing*. The creation of a Cambridge Information Center is in recognition of the importance the City Council places on this need. Because of this, the Office will be a cooperative effort of the City Council and City Manager's Office. The Office will sit outside the City Manager's Office and will receive policy direction and oversight from the City Council, and operational oversight and supervision from the City Manager's Office.

Cambridge Information Center: 349-INFO

The Cambridge Information Center will provide a highly visible, single point of contact for requesting service and information on City services and programs. Staff will work closely with the City Council and staff on constituent concerns. It is important to note that residents can continue to use vehicles for information and problem resolution that have been used for years; this Office is intended to be used as a supplement, not a replacement for these other mechanisms.

Co-located with the Public Information Office in a highly-visible location on the first floor of City Hall, the Office will be staffed by one full time person with, potentially, a cadre of senior citizen volunteers, and will have an easy-to-remember phone number: 349-INFO. Wide promotion of the Office and the phone number will make a strong statement to the public on the importance the City places on service excellence.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy".
Robert W. Healy
City Manager

Attachments: Overview of Cambridge Information Center



CAMBRIDGE INFORMATION CENTER

349-INFO

GOALS

- Simplify residents' access to information on city services and programs.
- Promote City's commitment to service excellence through a highly-visible office presence and phone number (349-INFO).
- Increase residents' ability to request information and services after-hours (24/7). Work with MIS and Cable office to increase interactive functionality of the web and Cable TV to expedite service delivery and increase range of options for customers.
- Respond to Public inquiries/troubleshoot problems.
- Continue to improve Public Information functions. Work to improve "Information & Referral" presence in City Hall Lobby

FUNCTIONS/TASKS

Provide residents with easily accessible point of contact within City government. Provide information, referral and guidance on city services and programs. Respond to requests for information or complaints and strive to make City government more responsive to needs of residents.

Respond to Public inquiries/troubleshoot problems

- Respond to **telephone** and **in-person** inquiries/requests.
- Develop form on the **web** for people to make inquiries.
- Through the **use of senior citizen volunteers**, work to improve presence in City Hall Lobby to provide "Information & Referral" services. Explore possibility of offering positions to senior citizen property owners, in exchange for credit towards their property tax bills (up to \$500/year). Develop a strong volunteer presence and recognition system (e.g. unique coats, provision of lunch).
- CIC needs to oversee process and make sure departments are responding to inquiries/requests in a timely manner. Provide "Ombudsperson" function

Work with departments to improve quality/delivery of services. Develop training programs to increase department's internal capacity.

- Collect data to assist in evaluating existing services/programs, including hours of operation.
- Work collaboratively to develop and implement recommendations.
- Improve telephone and customer service techniques in each department, with particular emphasis in large operating departments.

Continue to improve Public Information functions.

- Create and promote easy-to-remember, central phone number (349-INFO) to simplify public access to information and service.
- Increase interactive functionality of the web and potentially Cable TV to expedite service delivery and increase range of options for customers.
Improve web functionality.
Expand access to the web to people who do not own computers (e.g. kiosks or other public terminals).
Improve use of voice mail (i.e. giving information, directing calls), and voice mail messages after-hours.
Better promote 24/7 operations and where people can call after-hours and for what services
Explore 24/7 telephone line for non-emergency calls. Explore 311 (see Chicago and San Antonio).
- Work with PIO to develop a comprehensive program to welcome and orient new residents to the City.
- Work with Public Information functions to disseminate information.

Staff:

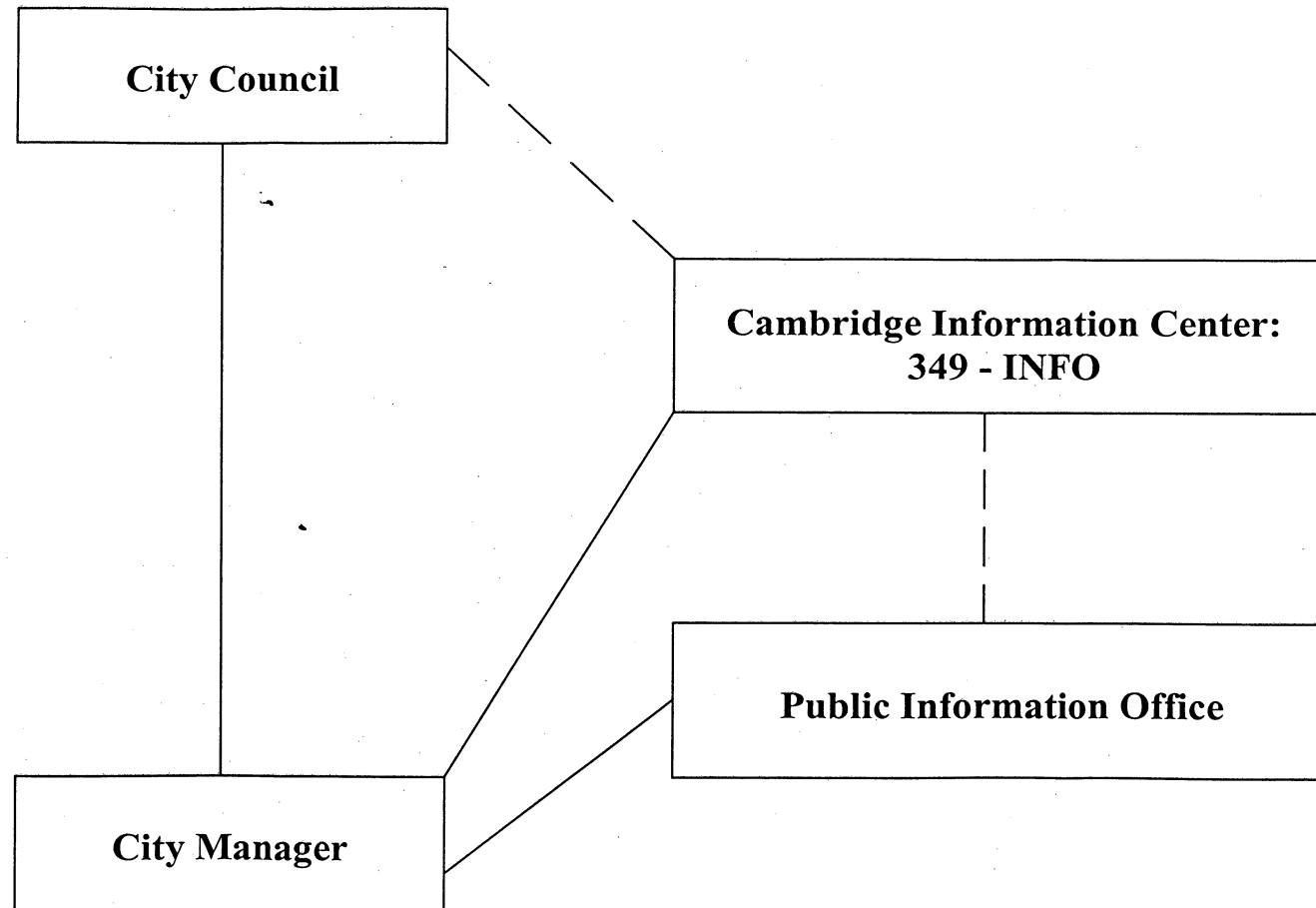
Director of Cambridge Information Center (new position)

- Refine Tracking/Response System
- Work with MIS/Consultants on web enhancements
- Expand customer service training (work with depts. and Personnel)
- Complaint intake, tracking and resolution

Complaint Investigators

- .5 FTE each of Executive Assistant and Administrative Assistant to City Manager.
- Complaint intake, tracking and resolution.

Cambridge Information Center: 349 - INFO



City of Cambridge

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair
Councillor Kathleen L. Born
Councillor Jim Braude
Councillor Henrietta Davis,
Councillor Marjorie C. Decker
Vice Mayor David P. Maher
Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves
Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.
Mayor Anthony D. Galluccio

In City Council June 25, 2001

The Finance Committee held a public meeting on May 29, 2001, beginning at 3:15 P.M. in the Ackermann Room for the purpose of a proposal for a creation of a Cambridge Information Center as a cooperative effort of the City Council and the City Manager's Office.

Present at the hearing were Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Jim Braude, Councillor Henrietta Davis, Vice Mayor David P. Maher and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Robert W. Healy, City Manager, Lisa Peterson, Assistant to the City Manager and Ini Tomeu, Public Information Officer.

Councillor Sullivan convened the hearing and explained the purpose. He noted that Lisa Peterson has submitted a revised proposal for this office (**Attachment A**). Councillor Sullivan invited Ms. Peterson to describe the proposal. Ms. Peterson summarized the proposal and described the modification in the most recent version, which provides for joint supervision by the City Council and the City Manager.

Councillor Davis asked where the office would be located. Mr. Healy and Ms. Peterson responded that it would be on the first floor, next to the City Clerk's Office, where the Personnel Benefits Office is currently located.

Councillor Sullivan explained that he, Councillor Braude, the City Manager and Ms. Peterson had met on Friday and had agreed on the importance of high visibility of this function. They also discussed moving the switchboard operator's desk farther out into the City Hall lobby, and, subject to negotiation, including more person-to-person customer service in that function.

Councillor Davis asked about the idea of using senior citizen volunteers for customer service in exchange for credit on their tax bills. She noted the need for the availability of persons who speak languages other than English. She added that she would like to see attention paid to the physical appearance and location of this new information function. She emphasized that it should not be a folding table and duct tape operation.

2745

Committee Report #2

Committee Report from Councillor
Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the
Finance Committee, for a meeting
held on May 29, 2001 for the
proposal for a creation of a new
office for citizen information and
services, the Cambridge
Information Center as a cooperative
effort of the City Council and the
City Manager's Office.

In City Council June 25, 2001

Report Accepted

PLACED ON FILE

ORDER ADOPTED

See Order #19