



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #5

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 23, 2000

COUNCILLOR DAVIS

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record extending appreciation to Mark McCabe, Bill Dwyer and City Manager Robert W. Healy and Harold Cox and his staff for their responsiveness with the West Nile Virus condition.

In City Council October 23, 2000.

Adopted as amended by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Margaret Drury". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" at the beginning.

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

City of Cambridge

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT*Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair**Councillor Kathleen L. Born**Councillor Jim Braude*

In City Council October 23, 2000

The Health and Environment Committee conducted a public meeting on Thursday, October 5, 2000 at 4:05 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber.

The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a working meeting to plan the City's public hearing on the West Nile Virus.

Present at the meeting were Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair; Councillors Jim Braude and Kathleen Born; Harold Cox, Chief Health Officer; Sam Lipson, Director of Environmental Health; Bonnie Johnson, Director of Public Health Nursing; Ricki Lacy, Public Health Nurse; and Donna P. Lopez, Deputy City Clerk.

Councillor Davis opened the meeting. The meeting is to determine how to have a hearing that meets the needs of the City and the Health Department. She further stated that publicity needs to be done so that people can express their concerns about the West Nile Virus.

Harold Cox, Chief Health Officer, outlined what occurred and where things stand now. Before he outlined the events as they occurred, he commended City Manager Robert W. Healy for his responsiveness, Mark McCabe, Animal Control Officer, and Bill Dwyer, Public Works Department, for their quick response to the pick up of the birds and to Ini Tomei the Public Information Officer.

The Public Health Department knew the West Nile Virus was coming. Mr. Cox said that the first infected bird appeared in Jamaica Plain. The guidelines received from the Center of Disease Control stated a two-mile arc should be placed around the infected animal. This placed the tip of the arc at Magazine Beach. Childcare centers were notified. Bug spray was distributed at the Mayor's Picnic and at the National Night Out and larva stage briquettes were put into the 3,000 catch basins in the city. Personnel were trained to treat the basins. A decision to spray needed to be made. The first community meeting held consisted of 55-60 people who were personally invited from the thirteen neighborhoods in the city. They were informed as to what was happening and what was being planned.

Councillor Braude asked if any decision was made to spray before this meeting. Mr. Cox responded in the negative.

Mr. Cox stated that one-week later, a second public meeting was held due to a discovery of a pool of infected mosquitoes and a bird found in Manchester. The two-mile arc covered 1/2 of the area of Cambridge, he said. A decision needed to be made on what action to take. A decision was made to spray based on the following:

- Cambridge is a highly dense area; and
- Size of the mosquito pool.

The mosquitoes tested positive in this pool, he said.

Mr. Lipson, Director of Environmental Health stated that other communities held off on spraying. When this mosquito pool was identified, the infection cycle was started. Mr. Cox stated that with a larger number of mosquitoes, the chance of being bitten increases. Larva sightings were done. Spraying, he said, kills adult mosquitoes. The spraying occurred on a Wednesday. The next scheduled meeting was to take place on Thursday. There is a lag time of 1-2 weeks between the time a bird is discovered and the time positive confirmation is made.

A discussion ensued regarding spraying by other communities. Councillor Braude asked Mr. Lipson why Brookline decided not to spray. Mr. Lipson informed the committee that Boston eventually did spray. Mr. Cox stated that the decision to spray is a city by city responsibility; it is not regional. Boston, Brookline, Newton and Cambridge sprayed. Somerville, Watertown and Arlington chose not to spray, he said. Mr. Cox stated that the city asked the Department of Public Health for guidelines on what criteria is used to spray. Information from the Center for Disease Control was used to make the decision to spray. The Department of Public Health, he said, could have been used more successfully to get information out to the public. The Globe and Herald had feature articles about the West Nile Virus, but the spraying was not outlined in the article. WBZ was more responsive. Mr. Lipson stated that WBZ ran public service announcements twice daily.

Mr. Cox stated that the mosquito pool was found on Monday. A decision was made to spray quickly. Flyers, reverse 911 system and a bullhorn were used to get the word out to the general public on spraying. A hotline was given out by the Health Department. Many venues were used to get the information to the public, he said. Cambridge was more aggressive than other communities in getting the information to the public.

Councillor Braude asked if the Health Department has post spraying analysis experience. Mr. Cox responded that the reverse 911 system did not get the information out to many people. It would take one week with four lines to get the word out to the entire city (more line are now available). Councillor Davis stated that the health issue pushed the system and now more is being done to improve the system. Mr. Lipson

stated that there were 1,500 hang-ups on the reverse 911 system. Councillor Braude stated that the issue of hang-ups should be dealt with.

Councillor Braude informed the committee that in his neighborhood there was a small number of homes that had their windows closed the night of the first spraying. Councillor Davis stated that education needs to be done on what steps should be taken when spraying is being done. Getting information out to the public could have been done better, she said. This information about spraying could be distributed in the spring. The vast majority of people pay attention to vital information during a time of crisis, stated Councillor Braude. Mr. Cox responded that the educational material would again be reviewed.

Councillor Davis suggested that schools could be used as a vehicle to deliver educational information about spraying to the public. Councillor Braude stated that the goal is that everywhere you look, you get the message, not what is the single best message. Councillor Braude asked if the Postmaster was consulted. Mr. Cox stated that the Postmaster stated mailing could not be done. Councillor Davis suggested the use of community bulletin boards to get the information to the community.

Councillor Braude stated that the flyers contained different information. Mr. Lipson stated that the city's web site was used. Flyers for the first spraying, he said, did not contain the specific dates for the spraying and this created confusion. Councillor Braude commented that whatever medium is used, the message must be the same.

Mr. Cox stated that Resmethrin, dissipates quickly and causes little harm.

Councillor Braude asked how many telephone calls were received from the Health Department. Ms. Ricki Lacy, Director of Public Health Nursing, responded that 200 calls were received per day. The calls were to get information or to complain about the spraying.

Mr. Cox stated that a meeting is needed to discuss the pros and cons of spraying. The dates were not discussed in advance. The public outreach piece needs to be more explanatory. The Health Department needs to answer the question "Why did Cambridge make the decision to spray when other communities decided not to spray?" she said. Mr. Cox suggested a panel of experts be brought to a public meeting.

Councillor Braude questioned why is there a need for so many authorities to attend this public meeting. Mr. Cox responded that individuals knowledgeable about the toxicology and the regional issues will be helpful to the public. Councillor Braude stated that the meeting needs to have a communication aspect as well. Mr. Lipson stated that the toxicology aspect of spraying is controversial. Experts, he said, sit on both sides of the fence and their expertise will be helpful. Councillor Davis suggested the formation of an advisory committee that will consist of experts and an exercise that

will generate sample questions that will be asked by the public. Councillor Davis asked that the Public health Department keep in contact with the Health and Environment Committee as planning goes forward for a series of two meetings in the spring.

Ms. Lynn Schoeff, Health Department, stated that the media did not adequately cover this issue. She would like to see people from major media outlets at the hearing also. Councillor Davis suggested a panel including the press.

Councillor Braude inquired if the general public will come to the hearing. Councillor Davis stated that outreach to the public needs to be planned in November with the focus on next summer. Councillor Born informed the committee that Neighborhood Nine has a petition circulating opposing the spraying.

Mr. Cox suggested that a first public hearing be held in January or February, 2001. Councillor Born stated that a public hearing in January is a media opportunity. She cited "It's winter and Cambridge is thinking about spring..." A second hearing would be held to respond to the public's concern and present a plan on publicity and decisions about spraying.

Councillor Davis stated that her colleague, Councillor Sullivan, was concerned about e-mail notification. Mr. Lipson stated that the e-mail list of notification on spraying will be kept by the Health Department. He further stated that he wanted to keep this list active because notification is instantaneous.

Councillor Davis stated that she trusts the Health Department. The Health Department does its homework. She urged the Health Department to give the public enough information and let the public tell the Health Department what they feel. There must be a balance between informing and listening at the hearing. Councillor Born stated that she did not think that the decision to spray was an easy decision. Councillor Davis expressed her concern about chemical exposure.

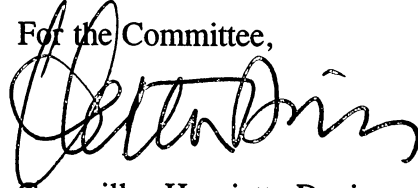
Councillor Born asked if you get bitten by a mosquito can you be immunized. Mr. Lipson stated that if you are bitten by a mosquito and you do not get ill you can be immune to the West Nile Virus. Councillor Davis thanked all who attended the meeting and made the following motion:

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record extending appreciation to Mark McCabe, Bill Dwyer and City Manager Robert W. Healy for their responsiveness with the West Nile Virus condition.

The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henrietta Davis", written over the printed name.

Councillor Henrietta Davis
Chair

City of Cambridge

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair

Councillor Kathleen L. Born

Councillor Jim Braude

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A report from Councillor Davis,
Chair of the Health and
Environment Committee for
a meeting held on October 5, 2000
to conduct a working meeting to
plan the City's public hearing
on the West Nile Virus.

In City Council October 23, 2000

Report Accepted.

Placed on file.

Order Adopted as Amended