



# City of Cambridge

O-30.

## IN CITY COUNCIL

September 13, 1999

COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU  
 COUNCILLOR BORN  
 COUNCILLOR DAVIS  
 MAYOR DUEHAY  
 VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO  
 COUNCILLOR REEVES

WHEREAS: Driving while cell-phoning is dangerous; as eloquently described in the attached *Boston Globe* article by Derrick Z. Jackson; and

WHEREAS: In the town of Brooklyn, Ohio, the Mayor has ordered the police to issue tickets to drivers making cellular telephone calls in moving cars; and

WHEREAS: MGL Ch. 90 Sec. 13 presently allows operation of a motor vehicle by a person using a mobile telephone as long as one hand remains on the steering wheel at all times; and

WHEREAS: The law clearly does not provide adequate protection in an era in which over 80 million Americans have cell phones; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the City Solicitor to provide an analysis of the ways that Cambridge can prevent this safety hazard, whether it be by home rule petition, city traffic regulation or ordinance; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the Police Department to provide as part of this analysis information regarding citations issued for driving violations that occurred while the driver was using a cell phone and accidents that involved drivers using cell phones.

In City Council September 13, 1999.  
 Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.  
 Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury  
 City Clerk

# Car phones and driving don't mix

**A**s my wife and I enjoyed an evening stroll along Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge, we stepped off a curb to cross a street. Just then, a driver with a cell phone in her ear and babbling like Elmer Fudd zipped around the corner.

The driver was aimed straight at us. She was talking in such a rant that we instantly judged that she did not see us. We knew that in a split second she would go through us.

We fled backwards to the curb. The yakking woman blew past us. I shouted, "Get that cell phone out of your ear!" It was I who felt like Elmer Fudd, since the wascally dwiver could not possibly have heard me with one ear on the phone and the other insulated by her rolled-up window. That did not stop me from thinking that if I could have gwabbed her scwevy phone wight then, I would have bwown it up into a million wittle pwastic chips.

Thank goodness such feelings were tempered last week when the Cleveland suburb of Brooklyn, Ohio, began issuing tickets for making cell calls in moving cars. Brooklyn's mayor, John Coyne, may not have heard my cry of phone rage, but he is definitely hearing an angry communique from an America that does not need this particular tool of "progress." He decided it was time to shut off the cell phones when he witnessed an elderly driver being rear-ended by a yakking cell phone driver.

"What we're telling people is that if you're going to give the gift of gab, get to the side of the road," Coyne said.

Most of us have experienced the benefits of car phones. Once a good Sa-



BARRIE MAGUIRE ILLUSTRATION.

maritan called the AAA to come tow a car I was riding in that broke down on the highway. I have made last-minute changes in plans with various friends by reaching them on their car phone. I have used their cell phones while riding to call my office. Tempted by these experiences, my wife and I tried out a cell phone last summer. We returned it not out of high morals but because the service did not reach the area we wanted.

The telecommunications industry, which is seeing to it that 80 million Americans will have cell phones by next year, loves to remind you that you could be stranded and freezing to death. Advocates of a car in every garage and a cell phone in every palm say car phones are the abused whipping toy of politically correct safetyphobes. The advocates say cell phones are no more evil than eating a bag of potato chips in the car.

Clearly people can be killed from turning to holler at a child or looking down into the bag for that last chip. But those are all accidents born of a momentary lapse in judgment. Cell phone calls go for minutes, even hours. On balance, the good may not be the price we are

paying, both physically and spiritually.

Two years ago, *The New England Journal of Medicine* published a study that found car cell phone use to be so distracting and absorbing it is as risky as driving drunk. The study found that using cell phones quadrupled the risk of getting in an accident.

Study author Donald Redelmeier once listened as one of his patients had an accident while talking to him from his car. Redelmeier, fretting about his role in the accident, said, "It brought new sting to the cliché of 'Physician, do no harm.'"

The anecdotes of auto accidents involving cell phone use has become a 30-car pileup. There are stories of people slamming other cars and emerging from the wrecks, even through sunroofs, still on the phone. There are stories of otherwise wonderful citizens who became slaughterers because their cell phone call to the hair salon distracted them from a stop sign.

There is the man who died in a collision with a truck after calling a pay-per-minute adult entertainment service. Speaking of pileups, there is the cell call

driver who hit a car, which in turn hit a car ahead of it. The man with the cell phone got out, ran past the car he hit and tried to tell the driver of the third vehicle that the car in the middle was at fault.

Beyond the issue of safety, the use of the car cell phones is symbolic of a nation so overworked that the freeway has become the great American conference call and where parents cannot get from jobs to child care pickups without the car call that keeps everyone from having a coronary. They

are a contradiction in a country where people complain about the decline of education but seem to take less and less time to shut up and reflect.

We bemoan the lack of Internet privacy yet freely cough up privacy in a last bastion in our car-centered culture. They are a hilarious symbol of status, with young adults from suburb to ghetto packing flip-top pieces as part of a self-important lifestyle.

Besides wondering how many of them can count past the 9 on the keypad, when is the last time you saw a *really* rich dude or dame driving his or her own car and dialing his or her own number?

I am not saying kill the cell phone. If someone wants one in his car for an emergency, fine. Just keep the phone in the trunk with the jumper cables and tire jack. Other than that, I am all for banning them while driving. The last thing we need is another danger on our already harrowing roads that gives us drivers as incoherent and as errant in aim as Elmer Fudd.

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W/A MGL Ch. 90 Sec. 13 presently allows operation of a motor vehicle by a person using a mobile ~~phone~~ telephone as long as one hand remains on the steering wheel at all times; ad

W/A This law, <sup>clearly</sup> does not provide adequate protection in an era in which ~~millions~~ ~~people~~ over 80 million Americans have cell phones; now therefore be it

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Order #30

CM 347

Councillor Triantafillou re: prevent  
the use of cell phones while driving  
in Cambridge.

In City Council September 13, 1999

**ORDER ADOPTED**