

City of Cambridge

NEIGHBORHOOD AND LONG TERM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair
Councillor Marjorie C. Decker
Councillor E. Denise Simmons*

In City Council June 9, 2003

The Neighborhood and Long Term Planning Committee held a public hearing on May 2, 2003, beginning at 2:13 p.m. in the Ackermann Room for the purpose of a planning discussion on how Cambridge can meet the challenge of the ongoing and fast-moving changes in the knowledge-based economy and culture of Cambridge.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair of the Committee, Councillor E. Denise Simmons and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Robert W. Healy, City Manager, Beth Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Estella Johnson, Director of Economic Development, Community Development Department, Alan Stone, Vice President of Government, Community and Public Affairs for Harvard University, Mary Power, Senior Director of Community Affairs for Harvard University, Steve Marsh, Managing Director of the Real Estate department, MIT, Paul Paravano, Co-Director of the Office of Government and Community Affairs, MIT, Michael Owu, Senior Real Estate Officer, MIT, Tom Lucey, President of the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce and Jay Kiley, Forest City Development and Management, University Park.

Councillor Reeves convened the hearing and explained the purpose. He described the origin of this meeting. He has long been troubled by the lack of an interesting urban design in the Tech Square area. In an initial tour by the Neighborhood and Long Term Planning Committee of examples of good and bad urban planning, Tech Square topped his list of bad urban planning. He therefore had an informal meeting with Mr. Paravano and Mr. Marsh from MIT that he expected to be about Tech Square. However, during the discussion it became apparent to him that the committee's attention was needed on a much broader topic – that of Cambridge as a focal point in the huge sea change in the world being caused by the revolution in life sciences and the knowledge-based economy upon which much of our local economy is built. It is also clear that other places would like to have the benefits that participation in this economy brings to Cambridge. Those other places are not just the far away places like Silicone Valley; they include closer places like right across the Charles River in Allston.

Councillor Reeves said that most of the residents of Cambridge are not aware of the profound changes in the economy of Cambridge, let alone the particular entities fueling this new economy. Local government must take a role in educating the citizenry. Before government can meet this responsibility to provide information about the new economy and answers to questions about the changes, there must be an understanding of

just what the fundamental question is. He thanked the group for reading the book *As the Future Catches You*, by Juan Enriquez, which was recommended to him by Mr. Marsh, and noted Mr. Enriquez's conclusion that in light of an ever-quickening change, we must pay attention to where we are in history and stay focused on a very quick moving dynamic. Councillor Reeves noted the need of government to be aware of and understand the changes. He invited comments from Mr. Healy.

Mr. Healy said that Cambridge's economy is very much knowledge-based, and it is so oriented because of the world famous universities located in Cambridge. Cambridge's economy depends to a large extent on these universities continuing to succeed. His first advice with regard to the role of government is to take care to do no harm. For example, the issue of rooftop mechanicals needs careful treatment. It is important to not provide disincentives for biotech companies to locate in Cambridge. Mr. Healy added that Councillor Reaves's concept of an educational forum is a good one, but it can be difficult to get public attendance. He likes the idea of getting the message out in a manner that is not charged and controversial.

Mr. Stone said that he sees the question as "How do we manage what we have for the benefit of the community in light of ever-expanding knowledge revolution?" He stressed the old-fashioned methodology of looking closely at what other places have done, putting someone in charge of the project and devoting the necessary time and resources, and maximizing public/private partnerships. It is also important to start with an early and achievable goal.

Mr. Parravano said that educating the government and the population is very important. There is no one right answer. He believes that it would be good to begin by planning a snappy and interesting event and from this develop the components for a public education project that could reach many different audiences.

Councillor Simmons stressed the importance of educating the elected public officials to whom the residents look for answers to their questions.

Ms. Rubenstein pointed out that the City has been working on these issues over the past few years, for example, in the rezoning that has been done, the attention to quality of life issues, trying to resolve traffic issues in a balanced way. We are seeing now a new chapter, with the new high commercial vacancy rates and the realization that Cambridge is not the only place that can be a center for a knowledge-based economy.

Ms. Johnson said that she moved to Cambridge from North Carolina. Cambridge does have competition and it is getting fiercer. We need to protect in Cambridge that which cannot be replicated. Ms. Johnson added that education is very important. We have to help people understand more about science, science in Cambridge and where it is taking us. This education needs to start at the elementary school level. Government should aim to bring all the citizens along to be able to profit from the benefits that we are getting from this knowledge economy.

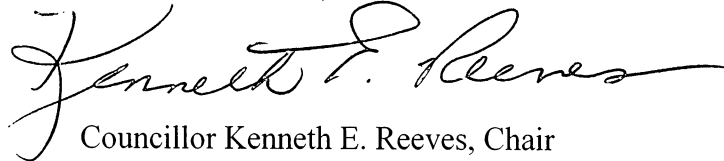
Discussion moved to the particulars of an event to begin to educate the Cambridge population about our new economy, starting with leaders and opinion-makers. It was agreed that the production of the event would be a shared activity among the City, MIT, Harvard, the Chamber of Commerce and Forest City. Ideally there would be a main speaker, with an interesting discussion panel to respond to the speaker and to questions. The panel would include someone from an industry association, for example the Massachusetts Biotech Council, a CEO or director of research from a biotech company, someone from the City administration, perhaps an academic.

There would be a fact sheet handout and perhaps some sort of display like those at trade shows. The audience would be decision makers and leaders including elected officials, city and school administrative leaders. The event would of course be open to the public, and food would be served.

The following persons agreed to participate in a small group to plan the panel and event: Tom Lucey, Mary Power, Alan Stone, Steve Marsh, Paul Parravano, Michael Owu, Jay Kiley and Estella Johnson.

Councillor Reeves thanked all those present for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kenneth E. Reeves". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair

S-205

Committee Report #5

A communication was received from D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk, transmitting a report from Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair of the Neighborhood and Long Term Planning Committee, for a meeting held on May 2, 2003 for the purpose of a planning discussion on how Cambridge can meet the challenge of the ongoing and fast-moving changes in the knowledge-based economy and culture of Cambridge.

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**REPORT ACCEPTED.
PLACED ON FILE.**