

# City of Cambridge

MASSACHUSETTS

Agenda #6 Petition to amend the Zoning Ordinance to improve a one-year development moratorium in the Alewife/North Cambridge area.

In City Council January 23 197 8

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	PRESENT
Mr. Crane	✓			
Mr. Danehy	✓			
Mr. Duehay	✓			
Mr. Frisoli			✓	
Ms. Graham	✓			
Ms. Preusser	✓			
Mr. Sullivan			✓	
Mr. Vellucci	✓			
Mr. Wylie	✓			

7 0 2

RD  
RF



OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

January 5, 1978

The Honorable, the City Council

SUBJECT: Petition to Amend the Zoning Ordinance to  
Improve a One Year Development Moratorium  
in the Alewife/North Cambridge Area

Dear Councillors:

In accordance with Chapter 40A of the General Laws, the Planning Board held a public hearing on Tuesday, January 3, 1978, on a petition to create a temporary moratorium on new development in parts of the Alewife industrial area and the North Cambridge residential neighborhood. This hearing was a reconsideration of two petitions filed last year by the City Council and the Planning Board. Because final action on those petitions did not take place in time to satisfy the requirements of the zoning statute, the hearing process has had to begin again.

Only one person attended the public hearing. Mr. James Curto, owner of property at 85 Bolton Street. He objected to the petition on the grounds that it unfairly limits individual property rights and that it is damaging to the City's business climate. Mr. Curto had previously stated these objections at the August 2, 1977 hearing.

This Board is generally concerned with what appears to be a trend toward the use of development moratoria as a device to stop development which is objectionable to some neighborhood residents. However, we believe that a moratorium is justifiable in this case because (1) the substantial and fairly rapid change in the type of character of development which could occur as a result of transportation projects in North Cambridge; and (2) because the city and neighborhood are engaged in a planning process in which future land use and urban design plans and a rezoning program are being developed.

The Honorable, the City Council Page 2. January 5, 1978

Because no new evidence was presented at the hearing, the Board recommends that the petition be APPROVED in accordance with our previous recommendations, copies of which are enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Cambridge Planning Board



Arthur C. Parris  
Chairman

ACP:jp

Enclosures: May 24, 1977 recommendation on original moratorium  
August 16, 1977 recommendation on extension



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS  
**PLANNING BOARD**

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

August 16, 1977

The Honorable, the City Council

Dear Councillors

**SUBJECT: Petition to Amend the Zoning Ordinance to Extend the Alewife Area Moratorium to Cover Additional Areas in North Cambridge**

In accordance with Chapter 40A of the General Laws, the Planning Board held a public hearing on Tuesday, August 2, 1977 on a petition to extend the current development moratorium in the Alewife area to cover the remaining portions of North Cambridge presently zoned Residence C-1, Industry A and Industry B. The petition was filed by the Planning Board on behalf of the Land Use Committee of the North Cambridge Planning Team.

**THE PETITION**

Last winter concern over uncontrolled new development in the Alewife area, due to proposed transportation improvements, resulted in a City Council resolution calling for a new zoning plan for the area. The Community Development Department advised that such planning should be undertaken as part of the Alewife Urban Design Study, then in process. On March 14, 1977, the City Council adopted a resolution to petition for a Zoning Ordinance amendment that would create a one-year moratorium on the issuance of building permits for new development. This hiatus would provide the Community Development Department time to work with the Neighborhood in determining the most appropriate land uses in the area, reasonable density limitations and other desired development characteristics.

This spring, as part of that planning effort, the Community Development Department staff met several times with a Land Use Committee organized by the North Cambridge Planning Team. One of the issues identified during those discussions was the uneven regulatory protection that then existed. Residents expressed concern that the threat of incompatible new development was greater than ever in that part of the neighborhood not covered by the moratorium, particularly on developed parcels with deteriorated structures and on vacant industrial land along the Boston & Maine railroad right-of-way. They requested immediate protection, either in terms of a downzoning or an extension of the moratorium.

The petition would extend the area of the original moratorium but it would not extend its one-year time limit. The moratorium would end one year from the date of the first advertisement of the Planning Board public hearing, April 14, 1977. The provisions of the original moratorium would apply to the new area: building permits for new development or additions to existing facilities exceeding 75,000 sq. ft. would not be allowed, but permits for renovations or small additions would be allowed.

#### PUBLIC HEARING

At the Planning Board's public hearing one neighborhood resident spoke in favor of the petition. Five businessmen owning property in the industrial zone along the railroad right-of-way spoke in opposition to the petition. Warren Carstensen of 42 Cogswell Avenue stated that the moratorium would delay his plans to construct a low profile mini-warehouse at the end of Cogswell Street. Gary Murphy of 113 Richdale Avenue expressed concern that he would not be able to sell his property. Others testified that the moratorium would place an unfair restriction of businesses that provide employment and tax revenues. It was suggested that the industrial areas be exempted from the moratorium.

#### RECOMMENDATION

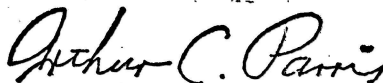
Because the moratorium extension petition was an outgrowth of neighborhood discussions and because no opposition from property owners in the C-1 district was expressed at the hearing, there is little question that extending the moratorium into the rest of the residentially zoned area is appropriate.

Since the public hearing, the Community Development Department has taken a close look at existing development characteristics within the industrial zones between Porter Square and Fresh Pond Shopping Center. The prominent land uses are wholesale trade, storage and trucking. Many of these activities have blighting influences on the residential areas which surround them due to high volume truck traffic on residential streets, to open storage of bulk materials and junk, and to poor building condition. On an average square foot basis, non-residential properties in the area pay slightly lower taxes than residential properties. Finally, with one or two notable exceptions, employment densities in the area are low. These findings raise serious questions regarding the reasonability of the City continuing to encourage the present development patterns in the area.

Because the moratorium will be of limited duration, because the North Cambridge Land Use and Urban Design Study is now in progress, because the future of the area of the proposed moratorium extension will be influenced by transportation changes and by City development policy in the Alewife area, and because many residents of North Cambridge wish to take a comprehensive look at the future of their neighborhood, the Planning Board recommends that the moratorium extension petition be APPROVED.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Cambridge Planning Board



Arthur C. Parris  
Chairman

ACP:jp



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

May 24, 1977

The Honorable, The City Council  
City Hall  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Councillors:

**SUBJECT: Petition to Impose a One Year Moratorium on New  
Construction in the Alewife Area**

In accordance with Chapter 40A of the General Laws, the Planning Board held a public hearing on Tuesday, May 3, 1977 on a petition pursuant to a City Council resolution to establish a moratorium on the issuance of building permits for any new development, except for the renovation of an existing facility or for an addition to an existing facility not to exceed seventy-five thousand (75,000) square feet, in the Alewife area.

At the February 27, 1977 City Council meeting, an order by Councilor Duehay was passed calling for the preparation by the Planning Board of a rezoning petition covering the Grace Company property in Northern Cambridge. At the same meeting an order by Councillor Ackerman was passed calling for the preparation by the Planning Board of an appropriate zoning plan for the land adjacent to Route Two. The Assistant City Manager for Community Development, David Vickery, advised the Planning Board that the preparation of a zoning petition and a zoning plan would require time to determine the most appropriate land use and zoning controls for the area as well as to inform the North Cambridge neighborhood concerning the ongoing planning process. As a result, the Community Development staff drafted a substitute resolution calling for a one-year moratorium on the issuance of building permits except permits for the renovation of an existing facility or for the addition to an existing facility not to exceed 75,000 square feet, which was adopted by the City Council on March 14, 1977 by a 7 to 0 vote and incorporated into the subsequent moratorium petition.

## RECOMMENDATION

At the hearing the Planning Board received a letter from the Conservation Commission in support of the proposed moratorium which stated that the moratorium would allow time for planning necessary to determine the future growth of the Alewife area, much of which is wetlands or flood plain. Also Reverend

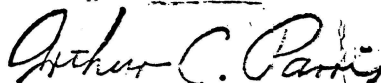
May 24, 1977

Lowry, President of the Neighborhood 10 Association spoke in favor of the proposed moratorium.

Mr. Boughton of the W. R. Grace Company and Mr. Beckstoeffer, an architectural consultant employed by Grace Company, presented their views on the moratorium. Both stated that certain events would take place regardless of the moratorium which would require decisions from Grace Company, based on the zoning for the area. The moratorium would place in doubt the future zoning designation for the area. Mr. Boughton and Mr. Backstoeffer suggested that the moratorium period be shortened, perhaps to six months, or that specific urban design and land use planning goals be set to be accomplished within the moratorium period.

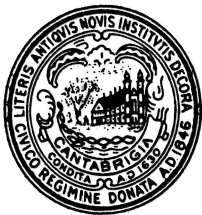
Based on information presented by members of the Community Development Department staff as well as on testimony given at its public hearing, the Planning Board recommends that the moratorium petition be APPROVED provided that the petition is amended so that the moratorium will automatically terminate on April 14, 1978, one year from the date of the first legal advertisement of the petition. Upon termination of the moratorium the zoning would revert to the existing designations unless a new zoning designation, developed during the moratorium will have been passed.

Very truly yours,



Arthur C. Parris  
Chairman

ACP:jp



## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139  
Tel. 876-6300

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
JAMES L. SULLIVAN  
City Manager

January 23, 1978

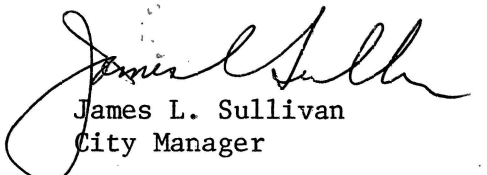
To the Honorable, the City Council:

I transmit herewith a communication from Arthur C. Parris, Chairman of the Planning Board, relative to a petition to amend the Zoning Ordinance to improve a one-year development moratorium in the Alewife/North Cambridge area.

Also enclosed are copies of two previous petitions submitted last year on May 24th and August 16th. Because final action on those petitions did not take place in time to satisfy the requirements of the zoning statute, the hearing process has had to begin again.

I recommend that the petition be approved.

Very truly yours,

  
James L. Sullivan  
City Manager

JLS/mbf

O-2

Petition to amend the Zoning Ordinance to improve a one-year development moratorium in the Alewife/North Cambridge area.

Copy sent to Planning Board on 1/25/78 (dl)

1/23/78

Report to Planning Board for Hearing and Report -

In City Council, January 23, 1978

1/23/78 RD

RF/Added =

Referred to Hearing on Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> 78

Trans Hearing with the City Council - & Planning Board