



A.R.#18

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

To : Robert W. Healy
City Manager

Date : July 27, 1982

From : Everett R. Kennedy *ERM*
Acting Commissioner, P.W.D.

Reference

Subject : Cambridge Common Irrigation
System - Interim Report

In response to Council Order number 9 dated June 7, 1982 I am submitting an interim report in regard to the investigation of the condition of the irrigation system in the Common. During the latter part of June and until the present time the Department has been making excavations and uncovering certain portions of pipe in the Common in an attempt to determine the status of the facility as it exist today. These investigations are continuing and necessitate this interim report.

The original installation was complete in 1974 with repairs to the system in the following year 1975 and years 1976, 1977 and finally terminating in 1978. It is evident that several factors contribute to the lack of functioning of the system at the present time.

1. There has been previously stated (correspondence from former Commissioner Conrad C. Fagone) that the system was inadequately designed.
2. During construction there appeared to be minimum supervision which allowed shoddy workmanship on the part of the Contractor.
3. There appears to be a substitution of materials in certain locations from that originally specified.
4. An attempt to operate the system it has been found that the continued abuse of it by vehicles of all descriptions have lead to serious problems necessitating extensive repairs.
5. The occupying of a certain portion of the Common by the MBTA during the Red Line subway extension has created or caused additional injury to the system, the extent of which is not known at this time.

In addition to correspondence from Commissioner Fagone, I am attaching certain pertinent memos and letters for the Council review which point out the problems leading up to the final decision in 1978 to effectively "abandon" any continued effort to keep the system in operation. The system cost over \$50,000 when it was installed in 1974, current prices would

OFFICE OF THE
CITY MANAGER

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indicate that replacement of the system would be effectively doubled in cost in 1982.

It should be clearly understood that the decision to abandon continued maintenance efforts in regard to the irrigation system was made with the full knowledge of the City Manager's Office in 1978. This decision was based upon the exorbitant maintenance cost involved in the attempt to repair the system which was subject to constant abuse. Recent system installation which include that of Riverside Press Park incorporate many modern effective safe guards against both the abuse by vehicles and that which occurs naturally by weather conditions. In addition in Riverside Press Park several additional zones have been provided which allow for continued sprinkling of planting beds in areas not subject to vehicular or pedestrian trespass in the event that any damage substained by equipment subject to these factors.

The Department Heads scheduled a conference with the designers of the system, Mason and Frey, to review the initial construction and to attempt to determine a course of action which would be effective in bringing the system up to date and into operation, however, the Council should be advised that initial investigations during 1982 coupled with previous maintenance repairs made up to 1979 would indicate that repairs to bring this system into line and operational today probaly would cost as much as the original installation.

The Department will continue its investigations during the summer in an attempt to answer the following questions.

1. Is it practicle to repair the existing system and at what cost?
2. Should the City consider replacing the system completely building in necessary safe guards to protect the system from abuse wherever possible?

The Council should understand that the City is getting into the area of irrigation system maintenance on a fairly large scale; witness the installation currently being completed in the old Kendall Square area, now called Cambridge Center. This is in addition to the installation presently operating in the Riverside Press Park.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

147 HAMPSHIRE ST., CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139 • TEL. 492-7450

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Conrad C. Fagone
Commissioner

August 18, 1978

Mr. Max Mason
Mason and Frey
Landscape Architects
243 Trapelo Road
Belmont, MA 02178

Dear Mr. Mason:

The City Manager has referred your letter of August 1, in reference to conditions at the Common to me. While I agree with many of the things you noted in your letter I feel it is necessary to comment on a couple of points.

The City of Cambridge, Public Works Department's budget for park maintenance is a very minimum budget. There is a very extensive amount of work to be done with very limited funds. While many people feel the trees are the most important thing in the City of Cambridge, I would have to say I agree they are important, but they must be considered in the overall City maintenance program.

The irrigation system that was designed for the Common is of very poor design and did not consider the future maintenance at all. While you stated that the system cost more than \$50,000, the department last year spent over \$5,000 maintaining this system by the end of last year. I was very frustrated and ready to abandon it. However, this year I very reluctantly decided to give it one more year, and as of this date this year we have spent close to \$10,000 maintaining this system. It is with great reluctance that I have been forced to decide that the City cannot afford this luxury, and next year we will be forced to resort to an occasional watering as best we can with our watering truck.

The trash baskets that were designed, also did not consider the future maintenance. Because of the vandalism problem in the City it would be impossible for an employee

Mason and Frey
Landscape Architects
Mr. Mason

August 18, 1978

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of any City or Town to lift these containers out of the concrete cylinders after they are filled with bricks, rocks or dirt.

The drinking fountain issue you point out has been out of commission because of vandalism. This has been repaired on many occasions and there is a limit to how much the department can spend again to restore these facilities continuously.

If you wish, I would be pleased to meet and discuss these items with you.

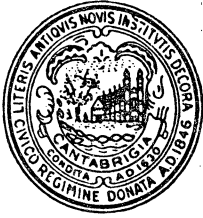
Very truly yours,



Conrad C. Fagone
Commissioner

CCF/ho'

cc: James L. Sullivan
Richard Lockhart
Ruth Birkhoff



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

FORESTRY AND PARKS DIVISION

7 INMAN STREET

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. 02139

TEL. 876-6800 - EXT. 321

John J. Condon

Supervisor

Philip M. Meskinis

MEMORANDUM

TO: Conrad Fagone

FROM: Philip Meskinis

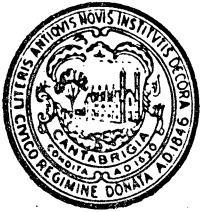
DATE: September 27, 1977

On Tuesday, September 27, 1977, a meeting was held on the Cambridge Common to review the progress of the construction, especially the tot lot and brick paths. Present were John Frey, landscape architect, Dick Lockhart, and Philip Meskinis.

In general the work is quite satisfactory. A few minor corrections and work details still have to be done. The landscaping will be discussed with the contractor at a future meeting. There is a possibility it might be done in the spring.

Two dead elms have to be removed, especially the one over hanging the tot lot. The old tot lot should be removed. If it could be removed before the contractor reseeds and regrades, it will save the DPW doing repair work to the lawn.

Mr. Lockhart also mentioned the sprinkler system at zone one. The estimate to repair this is \$700, material and labor. Shall he have the system repaired now or wait until the spring?



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

City Hall Annex

Inman & Broadway

EXTENSION 344

To Francis A. Pisani, Chief of Police

From Richard A. Lockhart, Director,
Open Space Program

Date June 13, 1975

Subject Police Vehicles on Cambridge Common

As part of my responsibility for reconstruction of Cambridge Common, I should like to bring to your attention the problems created by motor vehicles on this site.

Enclosed is a copy of a memorandum sent to your predecessor last fall, identifying these problems and suggesting ways to minimize them.

Over the winter, the lawn areas, sprinkler heads, and brick walks on the Common suffered a certain amount of damage by motor vehicles. Those vehicles known to have used the lawn areas and brick walks have been police cars, city maintenance vehicles, and vehicles involved in the reconstruction work. The last vehicular use is now coming to an end, and our contractor is repairing all broken sprinkler connections and damaged brick and lawn areas. I should like to take this occasion to renew my proposal that police vehicles be confined to the perimeter walks on the Common except in an emergency, and then be driven as carefully and slowly as possible over lawn and brick areas where required.

Neighboring residents with whom we have worked on the Common project have expressed their satisfaction with the current quality of police protection on the Common, particularly at the Civil War Monument where potentially troublesome gatherings take place.

I sincerely hope that there will be no conflict for your Department between protecting the public safety and protecting the condition of the reconstructed Common.

cc: Conrad Fagone



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

City Hall Annex Inman & Broadway EXTENSION 344

James F. Reagan, Chief of Police

To

Richard A. Lockhart

11/5/74

From

Police Vehicles on Cambridge Common

Date

Subject: As you and I discussed on the telephone, the design of the current improvements on Cambridge Common suggests a review of police vehicle practices on the Common.

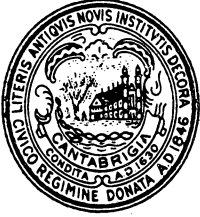
A large portion of the new walk paving is in unmortared brick. While this brick paving is constructed to withstand the weight of passenger vehicles, damage can result from sudden braking, turning, or acceleration. Also, motorcycle kickstands can break, depress, or dislodge individual bricks unless care is taken in parking the bike.

All lawn areas in the Common have been reseeded. Also, an underground irrigation system has been installed, with sprinkler heads, located just below ground surface, distributed throughout the lawn areas. As much as possible, vehicles should be kept off the grass until the root system has developed. Even then, depending upon the size of the vehicle and driver habits, the grass or the sprinkler heads could be damaged by motor vehicles, particularly when the ground is wet, and therefore soft.

Several of the improvements being constructed on the Common could facilitate police surveillance of the area and at the same time minimize the necessity of police vehicles travelling over grass and brick areas. A bituminous concrete perimeter walk, wide enough to accommodate motor vehicles, has been constructed on all three sides of the Common. Dense shrubbery has been eliminated except between the perimeter walks and the perimeter fence. The new lighting, when it is installed, is expected to illuminate the Common better than the previous system.

Consequently, it may be possible for police vehicles on routine surveillance of Cambridge Common to be confined to the perimeter walks. I should appreciate your considering this possibility and instructing all men assigned to this part of the City to exercise due care whenever it becomes necessary to drive on the grass and the brick areas in the Common.

cc: James L. Sullivan
Conrad Fagone



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

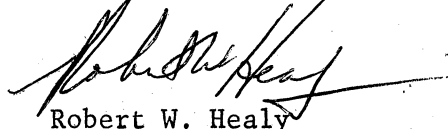
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

August 2, 1982

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With respect to Awaiting Report Item No. 18 relative to the sprinkler at the Cambridge Common, enclosed please find copy of a report from Everett R. Kennedy, Acting Commissioner of Public Works.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

Agenda Item Number Twelve

S-522

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item No. 18
Re: the sprinkler system at the Cambridge Com-
mon.

In City Council,

August 2, 1982

8/2/1982

Placed
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File