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OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

13 June 1991

Mr. Robert Healy
City Manager
City of Cambridge
Cambridge, MA 02139

RE: CITY COUNCIL ORDER #39 DATED 5/6/91

Dear Mr. Healy:

This is in response to your letter of 5/8/91 concerning the above-mentioned order. The Council order requests a meeting between the Housing Authority and the Fire Department to discuss a better emergency system in our elderly buildings.

Currently, when elderly residents need emergency assistance, they either use the phone or pull the emergency assistance cords located in the bathroom and bedroom of each apartment. Once this cord is pulled, an alarm sounds and a red light, located immediately outside the apartment door, is activated.

If this occurs during normal business hours, the Cambridge Housing Authority staff immediately respond. If it is after normal business hours, our two-person emergency maintenance crew or the Fire Department responds. If the Fire Department arrives before Cambridge Housing Authority personnel, they usually force the apartment door open and take appropriate action.

In response to the City Council Order, I instructed John Keane, CHA Director of Management, to confer with the Fire Department. After a number of conversations with Captain Larry Ferazani, it appears the only improvements possible are both cost prohibitive and compromise security.

The installation of an electric door release which is designed to automatically open apartment doors in an emergency would be obviated by the existing dead bolt security locks. These locks were installed years ago at the specific request of the elderly residents for added security against the possibility of forced entry breaks. At that time, and I believe to this day, CHA's elderly residents were far more interested in this added security measure than in emergency door openers.

Mr. Robert Healy
13 June 1991
Page Two

If we were to remove the dead bolt locks and install automatic door openers, I am informed that such installation would be cost prohibitive at this time. Staff estimate the cost of such installation to be \$400.00 per apartment x 1204 elderly apartments for a total cost in excess of \$480,000.

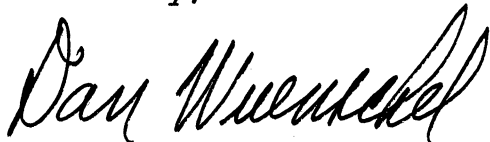
As you know we are currently seeking funds to install sprinklers in all of our elderly apartments in buildings over 70 feet high to comply with the new state law. This cost is estimated at \$2.3 million.

Therefore, for the cost and security reasons cited in the foregoing, we believe that we must live with the existing system; at least until technological advances present other alternatives.

For the present, I have instructed our managers to once again encourage residents to adopt the "buddy system" which involves giving one's neighbor a key. This is the case in a lot of our buildings but of course is voluntary.

If I can provide additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Wuenschel", written in a cursive style.

Daniel J. Wuenschel
Executive Director

0050M:46-47



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300
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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

June 24, 1991

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In reference to Awaiting Report Item No. 25, regarding a better emergency method for elderly buildings, please find attached a response from Daniel J. Wuenschel, Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority, concerning this matter.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

4.

S-903

CONSENT AGENDA

Awaiting Report Item No. 25 regarding
a better emergency method for elderly
buildings.

In City Council,

June 24, 1991

Placed on file