

## Final Decision Due on Harvard Tunnel

The City Council is expected to decide July 29 whether to grant Harvard's request for an easement to build a pedestrian tunnel under Cambridge Street as part of its new Center for Government and International Studies (CGIS--aka Knafel). At this meeting, the city manager plans to report on the negotiations between Mid-Cambridge neighbors and Harvard University, which have been occurring since late April and have now ceased without reaching an agreement.

At this time we do not know what Harvard intends to do regarding the tunnel—whether it will withdraw its request for the easement and proceed to build the new CGIS without the tunnel, or continue to pursue the tunnel easement—but we do know that Mid-Cambridge residents need to come together and bring a clear and united position to the City Council on the 29th.

On July 11, the results of the negotiations between Harvard, the MC neighbors and the city were reported at an informational meeting of the Association. The neighborhood negotiators reported the terms of Harvard's final offer of agreement, which they did not support (see insert to this newsletter).

They also reported the results of a peer review of construction impacts and mitigation of the CGIS project and its tunnel, which was conducted by engineering firm Parsons Brinckerhoff at the city's request.

**What's next? We need to decide and vote on these issues:**

Does the agreement offered by Harvard offer sufficient public good for MCNA residents to vote to approve the tunnel?

- If not, then what conditions, if any, would?
- How do we ensure the best possible construction mitigation for what will be an extremely disruptive project, with or without a tunnel?

We need to do everything we can to help all residents cope with this extraordinarily disruptive project and protect an important part of our residential neighborhood from overdevelopment and institutional blight. Best practices construction mitigation should not be a quid pro quo.

In anticipation of the City Council's vote, the MCNA Coordinating Committee strongly urges you join

with your neighbors to decide these questions at an MCNA meeting Wednesday, July 24 at 7 p.m. in the Sakey Room of the Main Public Library on Broadway.

At this meeting, we will vote on whether the agreement offered by Harvard offers sufficient public good for MCNA residents to vote to approve the tunnel, and if not, send a message about what terms and conditions, if any, would represent sufficient public good. At the July 29<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, we will present the MCNA position.

### Neighborhood Meeting

**The agenda is to take a clear position on Harvard's proposed tunnel before the final City Council vote.**

- **What conditions, if any, would make the tunnel acceptable to residents?**
- **Residents need the best possible mitigation for a very disruptive construction project, tunnel or no tunnel.**

**The neighbors of the twin buildings and underground complex of Harvard's planned international center need all of our support. Bring your thoughts, opinions, and above all your support to this important meeting.**

Wednesday, July 24, 2002

7 to 9 PM

in the Sakey Room of the Main Public Library, 449 Broadway

**For more information** about

Negotiations, see page 2

New Study of Construction Woes, see page 3

Harvard's Latest Offer, see insert

Background info, see [www.mcna.org](http://www.mcna.org).

And don't forget, the City Council will take up Harvard's tunnel easement request Monday, July 29, in City Hall. Public comment period starts at 5:30 p.m.

# Tunnel Negotiations and How They Broke Down

The Center for Government and International Studies (CGIS) Tunnel Easement Negotiating Group was created by the Cambridge City Council April 3 when the council deferred a decision on Harvard University's request for an easement to build a tunnel under Cambridge Street to link the two planned new buildings of the CGIS. Instead, the council called for a professional peer review of both the construction mitigation plan for the overall project and the impacts of the tunnel.

The council also asked for "forthright discussions" between Harvard and Mid-Cambridge neighbors to attempt to resolve differences over the tunnel and project that had been aired in a hearing before the council. Both the review and the negotiations were to be initiated by Cambridge's chief executive, City Manager Robert Healy.

In late April, the city manager asked John Pitkin, then president of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association, if he would participate in negotiations and seek nominations from among the project's neighbors of two others to serve on a negotiating group.

## Forming the Negotiating Group

At Pitkin's request, a group of seven neighbors of the CGIS project, Pitkin, and Joan Pickett, since elected MCNA president, met with Healy to discuss the process envisioned by the city manager. The negotiating group would be comprised of nine members, including three representatives of the university, Mayor Michael Sullivan, City Councilor David Maher, three residents, and Healy as mediator. In this meeting, the residents made it very clear to Healy that no residents would be authorized to make an agreement before it had been reviewed by the MCNA and other neighbors and, further, that at least two or three weeks would be needed to do this.

These nine residents then selected Rick Childs, Betty Collins, and Pitkin as their representatives on the negotiating group. Childs and Collins both live on Cambridge Street next to the planned project. Later, at a meeting on May 15, the association voted to approve these three as representatives in the negotiating group and directed them to report back to the association.

Harvard was represented on the negotiating group by Alan Stone, vice president for government and community affairs, David Zewinski, associate dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in charge of the project, and Mary Power, director of community affairs for Cambridge. Kathy Spiegelman, Harvard's vice president of planning real estate, and Laura Roberts, a

Cambridge Street resident and project neighbor, also joined in the latter phase of the ensuing discussions.

This group first met on May 3 and last on July 3, in a total of 11 or 12 meetings. Healy attended all but one.

About half the meetings were devoted one way or another to the engineering review of the construction mitigation plan and tunnel impacts, first to selecting a firm (Parsons Brinckerhoff) to conduct the study and then to hearing the results of the review.

Actual negotiations began in earnest on June 7. On June 21, after a final briefing by the Parsons Brinckerhoff consultants, Healy announced that he would make a report to the City Council at its mid summer meeting on July 29.

## Harvard Cuts Off Talks

On Monday, July 1, Harvard announced that it would not negotiate beyond July 3, and that if an agreement was not reached within two days, then all of its proposals to improve the project for neighbors, including the improved construction mitigation measures recommended by Parsons Brinckerhoff, would be withdrawn.

On the morning of July 3, the neighborhood residents pressed for further concessions from Harvard. The university representatives agreed to several of their requests but now insisted on a *signed* agreement ("memorandum of understanding") by the end of the day.

In an early evening meeting, the night before the July 4 holiday, the Harvard representatives continued to demand that the three residents immediately sign a statement of full support for the terms they had first offered that morning and that still existed only in draft.

The Harvard side refused repeated requests to allow time for MCNA review or even several days' time to give the three residents themselves a chance to fully consider Harvard's final offer. Neither Healy nor Mayor Sullivan was at this meeting.

At 7 p.m., the three Harvard representatives and Councilor Maher signed a handwritten statement of support for the agreement. Despite serious reservations about the terms of the agreement, Pitkin and Childs also signed the statement. Ms. Collins did not sign.

At 10 a.m. the next business day, Monday, July 8, Pitkin informed Harvard VP Stone, by phone, that, after consideration, he had decided that he did not support the terms of the agreement and said that he would not sign the final document that was to be prepared. Stone expressed disappointment and stated that this meant that everything Harvard had been offering was now  
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## Study Recommends Ways To Ease Construction Woes

From street closings to the annoying “beep, beep, beep” of truck backup alarms, a great deal of disruption lies ahead for neighbors of Harvard’s CGIS complex and its Cambridge Street pedestrian tunnel.

Exactly what neighbors of Harvard’s proposed Center for Government International Studies face during the two years of building the massive complex was detailed in a 16-page report by Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., (PB), a firm hired by the city and Harvard to perform a peer review of the proposed tunnel and construction mitigation. At the city’s request, Harvard paid the firm’s bill.

Despite the annoyances of construction, the firm concluded in its summary findings that “We firmly believe that if the measures we have identified in our final report are incorporated into the mitigation plan, then the project will be applying best management practices in mitigating its construction activities.”

The firm recommends the tunnel be built using the “cut & cover” method: cutting a hole in the earth, building the tunnel and then covering it back up. This method requires that the roadway, walkways, and utilities in the area be relocated and reconstructed. There will be loss of parking on Cambridge Street.

**Utilities:** PB notes that future construction of water, sanitary and storm drainage systems along Cambridge Street will be precluded by the tunnel structure as planned, although future construction of additional electric and telecommunication systems are possible. The report recommends that current plans be enhanced with no loss of gas or water pressure, and not preclude future technology or uses/needs for under-

ground space. PB recommends that a Web site specific to the project should be set up, and updated weekly.

**Traffic:** Currently Harvard is in the process of revising its traffic management plan for the construction, so there was no existing plan for PB to comment on.

PB reported that pedestrian bridges may be required to maintain walkways on both sides of Cambridge Street.

**For the relocation of 96 Prescott St.,** detailed plans should be developed for the sequential closure of Cambridge, Quincy, Kirkland and Sumner Streets to all traffic, and abutters should be notified of the timeframes for street closings.

**For the Sumner Road Sanitary Line Construction:** The construction will impact abutter access to off-street parking as well as to on-street parking.

**South Site:** Closure of Prescott Street will require the diversion of 150-200 vehicles during peak hours to alternate routes. Because the traffic signal at Quincy and Kirkland Streets operates at a poor level of service, construction vehicles are encouraged to minimize their activity during peak periods.

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## Joan Pickett Elected MCNA President

Joan Pickett of Ellery Street was elected MCNA president at a Coordinating Committee meeting in June. Her predecessor, John Pitkin, a founding member of MCNA, decided to step down after serving as president for the past 17 years. He plans to remain on the Coordinating Committee as an active member.

Originally from New England, Joan moved to Mid-Cambridge five years ago from New York City. She is currently the senior director, strategic planning at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Prior to joining BIDMC, she was a member of the Finance Department at Partners Healthcare System with expertise in financial planning and analysis.

She has both an MBA and an MPH from Columbia University, as well as a bachelor’s degree in biology from Boston College. In addition to serving on the MCNA board for the past several years, Joan is on the board of directors of Caring Canines, a Greater Boston volunteer organization that coordinates pet-assisted therapy visits to nursing homes, assisted living facilities and hospitals. She and her dog, Desta, a West Highland white terrier, have been involved in such work for over 6 years. Joan can be reached at 617-497-8816 or by e-mail at [jpickett7@yahoo.com](mailto:jpickett7@yahoo.com).

## Negotiations Break Off

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“off the table.”

The terms of the agreement under discussion on the evening of July 3 are described in the insert to this newsletter.

**The three neighborhood residents believe that Harvard’s demands on July 1 and 3 were arbitrary changes to previous understandings about the aim and nature of the negotiations. In making these demands, Harvard showed a complete disregard for the position of the three residents and a lack of respect for the local community of which it claims to be a part.**

*(Reported by the M-C committee members, John Pitkin, Rick Childs, and Betty Collins.)*

## Easing Construction Woes

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**Noise and Vibrations:** Work hours will be 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. PB points out that several pieces of construction equipment will exceed the city's noise emission limit, and suggests recommendations for noise mitigation, including checking neighborhood windows for proper caulking and providing exterior storm windows.

Noise and vibrations from jackhammers, vibratory pile drivers, soil mixers, dump trucks and delivery trucks are expected to be "excessive," "annoying," and even "intolerable" at times, the report said.

PB suggests notifying abutters in advance and erecting noise barriers where feasible. "It appears...that vibration levels at many nearby buildings will indeed be severe enough to cause occupants to be annoyed," the report said. One of the noisiest operations will be hoe ramming during demolition, and PB predicts that

"anyone using the Gund Hall facility during the demolition will likely find interior noise levels to be intolerable."

In addition, they suggest that equipment backup alarms be manually adjustable or ambient-sensitive.

**Dust, Vapor, Odor Control and Air Monitoring:** "Dust minimization is achievable," PB notes, "but requires the implementation of a series of controls that cannot be left to the sole discretion of the contractor." They suggest an air monitoring program be implemented to protect public health and the environment from dust and air pollution generated by construction activities. Additional dust control measures suggested include daily vacuuming, covering stockpile areas with protective foam, and limiting idling of diesel engines to 5 minutes.

**Rodent Control:** PB recommends several measures in addition to the CGIS Mitigation Plan: inspections on a biweekly basis instead of monthly; proper disposal of food waste; use of rodent-resistant compactors, and use of bait stations.

### NEIGHBORHOOD CALENDAR

**Wednesday, July 24, 7-9 PM Neighborhood meeting** to discuss where the neighborhood stands regarding Harvard's proposed pedestrian tunnel on Cambridge Street. Sakey Room, Main Public Library, 449 Broadway.

**Monday, July 29, 5:30 PM. City Council meeting,** Sullivan Chamber, 2nd floor, City Hall, Mass. Ave. The Council is expected to vote on whether to grant an easement allowing Harvard to build a pedestrian tunnel on public land below Cambridge Street. This vote will be the final step before commencing construction of the CGIS (aka Knafel), a large academic building complex on the campus/neighborhood edge.

**M-C NEWS**  
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**Special Edition:**  
**Harvard Tunnel**  
**Showdown**