

# M-C News

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION  
AND THE LONGFELLOW NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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March, 2007

## Mass. Ave. bars to stay open 'till 2 a.m.

Neighborhood residents and visitors alike now have a choice of three bars in a short stretch of Mass. Ave. where they can drink beer and wine until 2 a.m. on weekends, thanks to recent decisions by the License Commission to extend the hours for The Cellar, located near Dana Street, and the Plough and Stars, at the corner of Hancock Street. These two watering holes now join the People's Republik, which already had a 2 a.m. license.

The hearing on the application by The Cellar was held on Jan. 23. Owner Steven Capsalis, who lives in a penthouse in the same building at The Cellar, had done his homework. He presented a petition of support signed by over 100 local residents, most with an address within a three- or four-block radius of The Cellar. No one spoke in opposition. The Capsalis family has held liquor licenses in Cambridge for three generations.

### Neighbors protest the Plough

The application by the Plough and Stars' new owners was much more controversial. At the hearing on Feb. 6 it was supported by several residents and three City Councilors (Brian Murphy, in person, and Kenneth Reeves and Timothy Toomey, by letter) but it was opposed by five residents, including two immediate abutters, who spoke against the extension as well as several others who sent in emails in opposition.

The abutters expressed concerns about noise, because the Plough and Stars has live entertainment, smokers congregating at late hours on the narrow sidewalk, close to many residences, and unruly behavior by patrons leaving the bar. Concerns were also voiced about inebriated patrons finding their way home after public transportation service has stopped and the enabling effect of longer hours on binge drinking.

At the hearing, the owners withdrew their request to extend the hours of entertainment past 1 a.m. The commission approved the revised application by a 3-0 vote on Feb. 22.

These two decisions by the License Commission were made in the context of an effort by several city councilors to liberalize the city's CAP policy, that is,

make it easier to issue new licenses, especially beer and wine licenses. This was made clear in a council subcommittee hearing chaired by Councilor Marjorie Decker on Jan. 30.

At the hearing the Harvard Square Business Association expressed enthusiastic support for new licensed establishments that provide live entertainment to revitalize Harvard Square and increase its draw. Councilor Decker noted that Mayor Reeves favors more late hours for licensed establishments.

Decker went on to say that she wants an "open process" with a Working Group to formulate a new and specific licensing policy. She proposed a membership to include representatives of the Business Association.  
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## Library construction is finally underway; War Memorial is next

Construction of the new main library began in late January with the erection of construction fences and trailers. A total of three projects are now scheduled on or near the Broadway site. Two—the library and a new 350,000-gallon storm water retention tank under the park in front of the tennis courts—have been combined into a single contract that was won with a \$69 million bid by a joint venture of Consigli and JF White contractors.

The third project—the rehabilitation of the War Memorial Pool and Gymnasium—has completed the contractor pre-qualification process and is hoped to be put out to bid in March as a separate contract. The city hopes that a contractor will be selected and construction will begin by July 2007.

Alan Burne, manager of both the library and War Memorial projects for the city, reports that the contractors for the library and storm water tank have a record of well-executed projects. Consigli is known for its historic masonry renovation work and recently completed the renovation of the City Hall Annex and the Worcester Public Library. JF White has completed many underground utility projects throughout the city.  
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# ACN lets neighborhoods share ideas, struggles

The Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods (ACN) is comprised of representatives from East Cambridge, Riverside/Cambridgeport, Mid-Cambridge, Agassiz/Neighborhood 9, North Cambridge and West Cambridge. The board meets every month.

Over the last year Chris Robinson has served as the liaison between the MCNA Coordinating Committee and the ACN. The agenda is taken up by matters of concern to the board, with development and zoning issues playing a prominent role. From time to time guests attend the meetings: Former Gov. Michael Dukakis, State Rep. Rachel Kaprielian, City Councilor Craig Kelley, former Green Party Candidate Jill Stein, and Jinny Nathans from the Harvard Square Defense Fund have spoken over the last year.

Following are some of the issues the group has discussed:

**The proposed Harvard Law School** construction on Mass. Ave. has been of great concern to the Agassiz neighborhood. Gordon Moore, among many others, has been very active with this. A standing-room-only meeting at the Planning Board was held on Nov. 28 and a follow-up at the Board of Zoning Appeals on Dec. 14. The Planning Board granted Harvard's request for a permit to begin construction on schedule, but the BZA determined that Harvard will be subject to later review from the PB, the Historical Commission and the BZA.

**Future of Mass. Ave.** An outcome of this is a policy order from the city manager to convene a working group to discuss the future of Massachusetts Avenue. This committee met on Jan. 18, chaired by Councilors Brian Murphy and Michael Sullivan, with Denise Simmons and Henrietta Davis in attendance. Representatives from Harvard, MIT, Lesley, city officials Richard Rossi, Beth Rubenstein and Richard Scali, as well as others from the city, and about ten citizens attended. Ideas were invited for innovative retail concepts. Chris put forward the suggestion of a year-round farmers' market with tie-ins to local restaurants.

## ACN substitute representative needed

A conflict prevents Chris Robinson, liaison between the MCNA Coordinating Committee and the ACN, from attending the ACN meetings in April, May and June. If anyone is interested in doing this, please contact MCNA president Doane Perry at doaneperry@yahoo.com.

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## Issues with zoning, development and Harvard are uniting residents from Agassiz to Allston.

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**Harvard comes to Allston:** On Feb. 10, six ACN members met with residents of the Allston/Brighton neighborhood to share their experiences dealing with Harvard's development projects. The meeting lasted several hours and was considered to be very productive.

**East Cambridge** has been very active in requesting public involvement in the major North Point construction activities as well as the Mirant proposal for the boardwalk along the Broad Canal.

**In Cambridgeport** opposition resulted in a denial of Whole Foods' request for a liquor license to sell alcohol from the former cafe site.

**ACN and MCNA bylaws:** Some months ago, a proposal was raised in the ACN that the representative neighborhoods agree to give joint and mutual support to ACN resolutions on a number of issues such as development. Since the MCNA bylaws state that the Coordinating Committee cannot endorse positions without a vote of its membership, Chris raised objection to this. This matter has not been resolved and input from the membership will be greatly appreciated.

## Bars get OK to stay open

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ciation, the Chamber of Commerce, current licensees, one more neutral group (to be named), the Police and Fire Departments, and the City Council, but did not agree to a request from a Mid-Cambridge resident to include a representative of a neighborhood organization.

A representative from the city Economic Development Office spoke at the hearing. She pointed to a survey of all commercial businesses in Harvard Square and to the recommendations of her office's professional staff as indicating what Harvard Square needs for future development and change: more, and more diverse (i.e., non-chain) retail outlets, encouragement of foot traffic, mixed use, arts and culture, clean and open physical appearance, T-station upgrades and outdoor dining.

Expanded opportunities for drinking and live entertainment in bars seem to be the council's path of least resistance for revitalizing Harvard Square, but do little to address the broader needs of the Square or the city.

## Go green for spring!

# Green movement grows in Mid-Cambridge

Cambridge residents are deciding that the best way to deal with global warming is locally, with green groups springing up all over the city.

Several neighborhoods have founded green organizations, and Green Decade /Cambridge is sort of an umbrella organization. Here is a bit of information about some of these organizations:

### \* **GreenPort**

GreenPort is a newly formed ad-hoc group based in Cambridgeport with a mission of finding effective ways to respond to global warming as a neighborhood by supporting each other to reduce carbon emissions in the areas of home energy efficiency, renewable energy, transportation, food production, and urban habitats.

Members believe that individual choices related to energy consumption really matter, and that working on this issue creates a great opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other and to build community in ways that enrich our lives. The group also hopes to link with likeminded individuals and groups to promote large scale change. Since its formation in November 2006, the group has grown to over 40 people.

GreenPort meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Central Square branch of the Cambridge Public Library. For more info, contact coordinator Steve Wineman at [swineman@gis.org](mailto:swineman@gis.org).

## 10 things you can do to reduce carbon emissions

1. Convert to compact fluorescent light bulbs.
2. Keep your house cooler in the winter.
3. Drive less: walk, cycle, and use public transport more. Shop near home! See if you can carpool or telecommute some days.
4. Put your computer on standby when you walk away from it.
5. Wash your clothes on cold, use a front-loading washer, and hang them on the clothesline.
6. Fly less.
7. Unplug your cell phone charger.
8. Insulate your house, your attic, use storm windows or seal your windows with clear plastic for the winter.
9. Make sure all your new appliances are energy-efficient.
10. Recycle, buy less, and buy recycled paper

### \* **Green Decade/Cambridge**

(<http://www.greencambridge.org>)

Founded in 2004, this local chapter of the Massachusetts Climate Action Network consists of a group of Cambridge residents concerned about climate change who are taking action locally to reduce our contributions to the problem of global warming.

Join Green Decade/Cambridge to stay informed and get involved to reduce our community's carbon pollution. It aims to provide information to fellow residents and businesses in Cambridge in effective ways to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions while saving money, improving air quality and health, and enhancing the Cambridge environment.

Green Decade/Cambridge meets the first Wednesday of each month at the Harvest Food Coop at 581 Mass. Ave. in Central Square at 6:30 p.m. Current projects include a compact fluorescent light bulb campaign, supporting the city's climate protection plan, and outreach to residents.

For more info call 617-661-7678 or email [greencambridge@comcast.net](mailto:greencambridge@comcast.net).

### \* **Green Streets Cambridge**

(<http://greenstreets.blogspot.com>)

This group of Cantabrigians has created Walk/Ride Days, which encourages people to wear something green and use a "green" means of transportation on the last Friday of every month. Ride a bus, train, bicycle or scooter, skate or walk, or any combination, even carpool, as you set a good example for children, friends, and coworkers. The group's goal is to make Cambridge safer, quieter and friendlier for pedestrians and cyclists.

Originally started in March 2006 in the schools, the group has expanded to include businesses and organizations across the city. For info, email [walk-ride-days@comcast.net](mailto:walk-ride-days@comcast.net).

\* **CitySprouts** runs schoolyard gardens at four Cambridge public schools, integrating gardening with curriculum and encouraging students to learn about gardening and healthy eating from seed to compost. Contact them at <http://www.citysprouts.org>.

\* **A wealth of other online resources**, including energy tips for residents and businesses, can be found at the Green Decade Links page: <http://www.greencambridge.org/links.htm>. These include the Liveable Streets Alliance, Cambridge Bicycle Committee, Boston Area Solar Energy, which meets on Church Street, and Friends of Alewife.

## Neighbors to get alerts of construction noise

*(Continued from Page 1)*

experience that will be helpful not just for the storm water tank but also for the underground parking garage that is part of the new library complex.

Burne plans to keep the neighborhood abreast of project developments with both conventional and Web-based bulletin boards. The conventional bulletin board will probably be located under the willow tree across from Angelo's Pizza on Broadway, close to the existing library sign. The Web-based bulletin board is under the "Books and Mortar" section of the Cambridge Public Library Web site at <http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/CPL/booksandmortar/bandm.html>. Burne plans to use both boards to post notices of upcoming work as well as alerts to disruptive activities.

### Construction disruptions

Asked to give a preview of the kinds of disruptive activities might be expected, the first noisy activity, aside from the OSHA-required safety beepers on all construction vehicles, is likely to be the demolition of the high school's seating wall, which should be mostly done during the Feb. 19 school vacation week. If large boulders are encountered during excavation, noise and vibration could be noticed. The demolition of the 1967 wing of the library will be the next potentially noisy and vibration-causing activity, and it is scheduled to take place when the CRLS students are on summer break. At some point Ellery Street between Cambridge and Broadway will be closed in order to connect the new retention tank with the storm water collection system.

The construction in Ellery Street will be the responsibility of the Cambridge DPW, not the joint venture. Burne explained that the neighborhood will not suffer from pile driving noise, as all of the piles for the library and the garage will be drilled.

Burne has also promised to talk to the city electricians to see if the lights in the parts of Joan Lorentz

Park that are being left open to the public could be kept burning. Currently all the park lights have been turned off, making the park dark and potentially dangerous at night.

If all goes well, the city hopes that the library and storm water projects will be completed by the summer of 2009. The War Memorial project, which is smaller in scope, is planned to be completed by August 2008.

## Meeting for residents on War Memorial renovations

Neighbors are invited to a neighborhood briefing on the War Memorial renovation project with city officials who will also answer residents' questions. The meeting is at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 7, at the Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School cafeteria, 459 Broadway.

Topics include the project's time frame and scope. It has been planned for years and involves some green building improvements, air quality and air conditioning to make the building more useable in hot weather, and locker room updating. Those interested in attending should contact Robert Lindamood, the neighborhood liaison, at [rlindamood@earthlink.net](mailto:rlindamood@earthlink.net).

The War Memorial is the athletic building east of the main high school entrance on Cambridge Street. It houses a basketball court, pool, locker rooms and offices.

School Committee member Patty Nolan is exploring the possibility of an environmentally sustainable heating and energy production system for the rehabilitation work planned at the CRLS War Memorial site.

### Funding restored for library 'greening'

The City Council voted in December to add an extra \$150,000 to the library construction budget to cover the process of applying for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. This funding had previously been rescinded in order to keep down construction costs. City manager Robert Healey said in a letter to the council that he supports constructing the library with energy efficiency, sustainability and green building technology.

Kudos to MCNA member Karen Carmean, City Councilor Craig Kelley, and others who made it happen.

### Prospect Street rezoning

The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on rezoning Prospect Street at 7:40 p.m. on Tuesday, March 20, at the McCusker Center, 344 Broadway, Second Floor Meeting Room.

The City Council has proposed creating a Prospect Street Overlay District that would not change the allowed uses, but require new front-yard setbacks, open space, landscaping, and set up new guidelines for building, site and landscape design to improve the image of the Prospect Street corridor and enhance the pedestrian experience.

These changes could affect reported impending decisions about redevelopment of the Whole Foods Market building. Issues of use will be addressed at a March 8 public meeting held by the Community Development Dept. (See Calendar on Page 6).

## Neighborhood News briefs

### Infill townhouses proposed on Broadway

A public hearing on an application to construct two new townhouses at the rear of 378 Broadway will be held by the M-C Neighborhood Conservation District Commission on Monday, March 5. Owner Roderick MacFarquhar has applied for a binding certificate on behalf of Guy Asaph, a prospective buyer, to build two new townhouses in the back and to make minor alterations to the front house. The meeting is at 6 p.m. in the Community Meeting Room, second floor of the McCusker Center, 344 Broadway.

### Sue Myers joins Coordinating Committee

The MCNA Coordinating Committee named Sue Myers of 55 Trowbridge St. its newest member at the January meeting. She was appointed to replace Sam Seidel, who resigned from the board in November but will continue his work on protecting Joan Lorentz Park's legal status (see story, Page 6).

A Mid-Cambridge resident for the past five years, Sue was an administrator in early childhood/special education programs for 25 years, then taught English while living abroad. She also served 18 years on a local school board in Maine and enjoys grassroots politics.

### Longfellow Community Ski Trip 2007

Over 50 people from the neighborhood journeyed to Sargent Camp in Hancock, N.H. (outside Peterborough) for the annual Longfellow Community Ski Trip the weekend of Feb. 2-4. We arrived in falling snow that left about 4 inches on the ground by Saturday morning. The ice on the lake was as smooth as could be wished, so with a little shoveling, a skating rink was quickly established. Saturday was a full day of skiing the trails, skating on the lake, tubing on the hill, socializing with people we haven't seen in awhile, and generally enjoying the winter outdoors. Saturday evening we had a bonfire to roast (and burn) marshmallows and make some smores, followed by a lively and interesting game of Charades, with all ages fully involved.

Sunday was more skating, skiing, and tubing. It was a little nippy on the lake, but skiing the trails in the woods was just lovely. Of course, you can just sit around the fire if you wish. Then after lunch Sunday, it's packing up and saying good-bye to Sargent Camp for another year.

To see some photos of the trip taken by Kate Virjmoet, go to <http://web.mac.com/kvirjmoet/iWeb/Site/Library%202.html>. George Bossarte also has photos from previous years in a scrapbook. This is a real family event, with all ages from toddlers to grand-

parents. This year we had 10 children under 7.

The name "Ski Trip" does not properly describe this event. It is not just for skiing, it is a social weekend, a winter outdoor weekend, an adventure weekend. It is a weekend where children can go outside in a safe environment. This is about the 30th annual trip, the 28th at Sargent Camp, we think.

Next year's trip is scheduled for the weekend of February 1, 2, and 3, 2008. If you would like more information, or to be notified about signing up next fall, please contact George Bossarte at 4 Antrim St., 617-876-0390 or [gbeng@world.std.com](mailto:gbeng@world.std.com). The Ski Trip is a function of the Longfellow Neighborhood Council.

### Knitting classes at Longfellow

A six-week class in Beginning and Intermediate Knitting for all ages begins March 1 with instructor Amy Meltzer. Time: 4 to 5:45 p.m. Cost: \$75 plus materials (about \$15-20 for beginners). Location: The Longfellow Community School, 359 Broadway. For more info, contact Penelope Kleespies at 617-349-6260.

### Holiday party a smash

The MCNA annual holiday party, held in December at the beautiful Highland Avenue home of Margaret (Tuny) McMahon, was an unqualified success. About 60 or so members attended bearing every variety of food for the table, and though wine was served it was the hot apple cider that took a popularity prize. There was no snow or Santa Claus, but the good conversation and camaraderie made for a very festive evening. Many thanks to Tuny for hosting.

### In Memoriam: Ted Carpenter

The M-C News notes with sadness the passing of Ted Carpenter of Hancock Street, who died suddenly on December 4, 2006, at age 61. Ted designed the original MCNA Web page and served on the MCNA Coordinating Committee for three years. He was also a member of the Library Design Advisory Committee and the Cambridge Planning Board. A memorial service was held for Ted at the Harvard Faculty Club on Dec. 8. Ted was a good neighbor and will be remembered for his many contributions to our neighborhood and the city.

## Public support needed to protect Joan Lorentz Park

It may come as a surprise to some that although Joan Lorentz Park on Broadway is officially designated as open space, the city of Cambridge is nevertheless free to build certain types of public-use buildings on that land (such as a firehouse), with little or no public input or review.

Greater protection is afforded by a provision called Article 97, which allows land to be designated as permanent park space (i.e., protected from encroachment). However, to invoke this measure, the City Council must request a home rule petition asking the state legislature to grant this special status. The

legislature then needs to adopt the provision with a two-thirds vote in favor.

MCNA member Sam Seidel has explored this possibility with W. Bradley Freeman, a legislative aide from State Rep. Alice Wolf's office. If there is sufficient public support for this, any member of the Cambridge delegation in the House or Senate could file a bill to protect the land.

Please let us know your thoughts on this issue by contacting Sam Seidel at 617-547-1067 or [samseidel@aol.com](mailto:samseidel@aol.com), or call Christopher Robinson at [chrisrobinson@rocketmail.com](mailto:chrisrobinson@rocketmail.com) or 617-661-4731.

### NEIGHBORHOOD CALENDAR

**MCNCDC hearing on 378 Broadway infill plan, Monday, March 5, 6 p.m.** for binding certificate to construct two new townhouses at rear of lot. Second floor, Community Meeting Room, McCusker Center, 344 Broadway.

**War Memorial Renovation Public Meeting, Wednesday, March 7, 6:30 p.m.** Project manager Alan Burne will review the War Memorial renovations with the neighborhood at the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School cafeteria, 459 Broadway.

**Preserving small business in Mid-Cambridge, community meeting, March 8, 7 to 8:30 p.m.** The Community Development Dept. is holding this public meeting for residents on zoning to preserve small businesses in Mid-Cambridge, at the CRLS media cafeteria, 459 Broadway.

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The M-C News is published by the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association and the Longfellow Neighborhood Council. *Editor:* Paula Lovejoy. *Reporters:* David Szlag, Chris Robinson, Chantal Eide, Sam Seidel, John Pitkin, Doug Myers, Tuny McMahan, George Bossarte. The MCNA does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

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