

# M-C News

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

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## Association Advances Residents' Role In Library Design

Over the past three months, the Neighborhood Association has organized residents to play a strong role in the design of the planned 90,000-square-foot expansion of the Main Public Library on Broadway.

Two subcommittees have been formed and have started to address the issues of Traffic and Parking, and Design and Open Space. And a neighborhood delegation has met with City Manager Robert Healy to urge him to include an M-C resident on the city committee that will make recommendations on the selection of a design team for the project.

The effort was initiated at our membership meeting on February 7 and further developed at a second meeting on April 10. Our goal is a top-quality design for the new library in a redesigned library/high school/park

complex that both serves the high school and protects the quality of the park. The school and park, like the existing library, are irreplaceable public assets.

The subcommittees' mission is to make strong recommendations on key issues that can be endorsed by residents. It will then be up to the Association's members, subcommittees and Coordinating Committee to advance the recommendations in the design process.

### Key Appointments

We are also seeking the appointment of well-qualified M-C residents to two official boards that will guide the project, the Designer Selection and Library Design Advisory committees. These committees must be receptive to the concerns of the project's neighbors to assure they will get full consideration when the key decisions are made.

The most immediate priority is the Designer Selection Committee, which in the next two months will evaluate the 13 design teams that have expressed interest in the library project. The city manager will  
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## Annual Meeting: Library, Graffiti, Mosquitos, and More

The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association will hold its Annual Meeting

**Wednesday, May 16, 2001**

**7:30 PM, Longfellow School Cafeteria** (359 Broadway, courtyard entrance)

### Agenda

- **Report of the Officers** on the state of the Association.
- **Election of Coordinating Committee for 2001-02.** The nominees are Ted Carpenter (new--Hancock St.), Elizabeth Gombosi (Irving St.), Frankie Lieberman (Ellsworth Ave.), Paula Lovejoy (Clinton St.), Martha Osler (Irving Terr.), Doane Perry (new--Cambridge St.), Joan Pickett (Ellery St.), John Pitkin (Fayette St.), Keren Schlomy (Irving Terr.), Rachael Solem (Ellsworth Ave.).
- **Report of the Library Project Design** and Open Space Committee, and Traffic and Parking Committee, and vote on recommendations. See story on library planning (above) for details.
- **Graffiti.** Abe Rosner, of Clinton Street, has asked the Association to try to stop the wave of graffiti that has swept across our neighborhood. We have invited Sgt. Joe Wilson, the Police Department's Mid-Cambridge liaison, to discuss the situation and what can be done to clean up the existing tags and prevent new ones.
- **Angelo's Pizza Violations.** Trowbridge Street residents Dolores Johnson and Al Cameron asked for help in dealing with a number of problems in their area. One of these was the apparent failure of Angelo's Pizza on Broadway to comply with city regulations for handling trash, which has apparently led to a large rat infestation. There will be a short report and recommendation for how the Association can help to address the problem.
- **West Nile Virus Spraying.** Allen West, a resident of Dana Street, and Public Health Commissioner Harold Cox have been invited to explain their positions against and for spraying, and to start a discussion on an issue that potentially affects everyone. A proposal by Mr. West to oppose further spraying will be considered. (Story, Page 2.)
- **New Business.** Proposals by members.

## West Nile Virus: A Case Against Spraying

Last summer, the city initiated general spraying of Mid-Cambridge and most of Cambridge in an effort to control the population of mosquitoes that were found to be carrying West Nile Virus. The City's Public Health Department plans to test mosquitoes for the virus again this summer and to begin spraying as soon as infected mosquitoes are detected.

Allen West, Dana Street resident and member of the city's West Nile Virus Advisory Committee, has asked the MCNA to consider the arguments against spraying to control the virus. We will take this up at our annual meeting. The following are excerpts from his "Perspective on Spraying as a Means of Controlling WNV."

"We believe that municipalities should not spray neighborhoods with resmethrin+PBO because the efficacy of spraying has not been verified, some toxic effects on humans are verified, and others loom unpleasantly.

If the low incidence of WNV last summer among people living near infected mosquitoes is replicated this year, we strongly oppose spraying even if it is proven to be "effective."

Given the uncertainty of spraying's efficacy and its real and potential dangers, a decision to spray even small neighborhoods ... in 2001 is not rational.

There is general agreement on a vigorous campaign this year, to include the following actions:

- Eliminate breeding sites, but don't put larvicide in catch basins unless there are larvae there.
- Use "Mosquito Magnets" as an alternative to spraying if an agreed-upon threshold of response is reached.
- Educate residents to take responsibility for their own and their families' safety (clothing, DEET, screens, standing water in yards, taking care after dark).
- Educate citizens about the dangers of pesticides, especially spraying them at large.

## Neighbors To Play a Role in Design of New Library

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make the final selection from a short list chosen by the committee.

On April 24, John Pitkin, MCNA president, Rachael Solem, a member of the MCNA Coordinating Committee, and John Gintell, a member of the MCNA Design and Open Space committee, met with the city manager, Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi, and Assistant City Manager Lisa Peterson to discuss the Association's request for a strong role in the official process.

It was agreed that this would be the best way to ensure a successful project, and the city manager agreed to consider MCNA recommendations for a resident to join the city officials on the Designer Selection group.

On April 27, the Association recommended three residents for this committee: Frankie Lieberman, Laura Roberts, and Hugh Russell. Ms. Lieberman is a contractor and expert on historic preservation, has served two terms on the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission, and is a member of the MCNA Coordinating Committee.

Ms. Roberts is a management consultant to non-profit institutions and has been active in representing her neighbors' concerns over Harvard's proposed Knafel Center. Mr. Russell is an architect, serves on the Planning Board, and is a former member of the MCNA Coordinating Committee.

It is expected that the Designer Selection Committee appointments will be made very quickly. The Design Advisory Committee will be formed after a designer is selected, in several months. Unlike the selection committee, it will be comprised mainly of residents. Once the city manager requests applications, the Association will seek residents to apply to this committee as well.

### Traffic Concerns

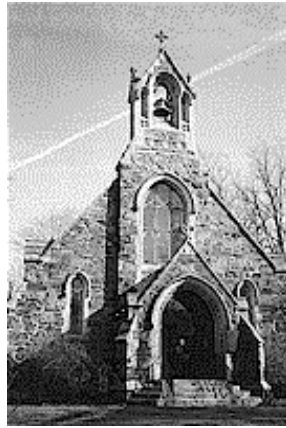
The Traffic and Parking subcommittee is concerned that transportation issues need to be fully addressed from the beginning of design development and is preparing recommendations to put before the Association's annual meeting.

These include a request for a comprehensive traffic/parking study, an inventory of resident parking demand, and planning for public transportation to the complex. The subcommittee welcomes input and new members. Please contact Joan Pickett at 617-497-8816 or [jpickett7@yahoo.com](mailto:jpickett7@yahoo.com).

The Design and Open Space committee has identified the range of interests that need to be considered in the design, library users, the high school community, park users, and neighbors and identified key design issues, but has not yet made specific recommendations to the Association. The subcommittee welcomes input and new members. Please contact John Gintell at 617-876-5461 or [gintell@shore.net](mailto:gintell@shore.net).

# Saved from Development, Swedenborg Chapel Seeks To Give Back to the M-C Community

As many M-C residents will remember, about three years ago the Swedenborg Chapel, a unique English Gothic Revival style building on the corner of Quincy and Kirkland Streets, was almost sold to a developer who wanted to build a large residential building over the church, using the chapel as a lobby. The building was up for sale because its congregation could no longer afford



to keep the property. Though the longstanding and active congregation has worshipped at the stone church for some time, the building is actually owned by the Swedenborg Theological School in Newton.

Efforts by the mid-Cambridge community and others residents led to the City Council granting landmark status to the building. This means the exterior cannot be changed without approval by the Historical Commission, and therefore makes the site undesirable to a developer. The chapel was built in 1901 and was designed by Herbert Langford Warren, an associate of noted architect H.H. Richardson and founder of the School of Architecture at Harvard University.

The congregation has now arranged to purchase the property. It is concerned that it not only preserve its spiritual home, but maintain an important historical asset to the community. As owners of the property, the congregation will actively seek to strengthen its ties with and serve the community in ways yet to be determined by the community.

A meeting was held April 17 to inform the community of the large commitment the congregation has made to acquire the property. They seek any help residents can give and wish to begin a conversation with the neighborhood to explore how the church can best be of service to the greater community.

Current plans include several phases. Phase I focuses on the Save the Chapel Fund, raising over \$2 million in the next two years to buy the property. Although they have been working hard to define their plan of action, expertise from the community in fundraising, administration, organization, and publicity would be most welcome. The congregation is hoping a community steering/advisory committee can be formed to help define what the community wants and needs and how the church can best help meet those needs.

Once the building has been secured, a second phase would seek further funds to allow necessary repairs of this historic site.

Phase III would replace the current addition to the church with a structure which would not only be architecturally more desirable, but could include a "community room" and a classroom, as well as other spaces which could accommodate programs both the church and the community desire. Mid-Cambridge is woefully lacking, for instance, in available space for meetings of all sorts.

For further information on future meetings or to indicate your willingness to help in any way, please contact President Lars-Erik Wiberg or Rev. Bob Tafel at the Swedenborg Chapel, 50 Quincy St., 617-864-4552, 888-818-4500, [www.swedenborgchapel.org](http://www.swedenborgchapel.org).

## Prospect St. Bread & Circus Has No Plans to Close

**Rob Twyman**, team leader at the Bread and Circus store on Prospect Street, has told M-C News that his company has "every intention" of continuing to operate the store at its current site, provided they can negotiate a new lease with the owner of the building.

Mr. Twyman's statement is good news for Mid-Cambridge residents. It had been rumored that the opening of a new, larger Bread and Circus store now under construction on River Street would lead the company to close the Prospect Street store.

This store is one of only two full-service food markets located in Mid-Cambridge, and many area residents depend on it as a convenient source for high quality fresh foods and staples. It provides an important service to many neighborhood residents, especially those who walk to shop.

## Two New Members Join M-C Conservation District Commission

Two new members have recently been appointed by City Manager Robert Healy to the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission. They are **Carole Perrault** and **James (Woody) Watson**. Carole is the newest tenant member. She is a conservator and architectural historian with the National Park Service. Woody, the third alternate on the Commission, owns a historic mansard house on Harvard Street and is an anthropology professor at Harvard.

Although the Commission membership is complete at this time, there is always a need for new members, so people interested in serving should send a letter with resume to Robert Healy at City Hall.

# Census 2000 Results for Mid-Cambridge

Early census results show that Mid-Cambridge did not contribute to the city's first significant increase in population in several decades. While Cambridge's population increased by 5.8 percent, to 101,355, between 1990 and 2000, Mid-Cambridge's population, excluding Harvard Yard, remained nearly level. In 2000, the neighborhood's population was 11,467, or 1.9 percent lower than in 1990.

The areas that had the most substantial declines were three blocks with large group quarters facilities, the nursing home on Prospect Street, which was closed, Youville Hospital, and two Harvard freshman dorms on Harvard and Prescott Street, whose residents are reported to have been counted in another neighborhood. There was little net change in any other part of the neighborhood.

Just how the rapid turnover of residents that has followed the end of rent control resulted in so little net change is not indicated by these early census results.

Data to be released later on vacancies, household size, and socio-economic characteristics are expected to show changes in the composition of the population.

One early indication of the trends are the changes in race and ethnicity. The population of Mid-Cambridge, like Cambridge and the U.S., is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, though it remains less diverse than either the city or nation as a whole. Between 1990 and 2000, our neighborhood's black population was up from 5 to 6 percent of the total, the Asian population rose from 8 to 11 percent and the Hispanic population increased from 4 to 5 percent.

The two major racial groups that are over-represented in Mid-Cambridge relative to the nation as a whole are non-Hispanic whites and Asians.

Another early result is that the number of children under age 18, which grew by more than 100 over the decade, remained at a low 10 percent of the overall Mid-Cambridge population.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CALENDAR

**Wednesday, May 16, 7:30 PM** Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association annual meeting, Longfellow School Cafeteria, 359 Broadway. Please enter from the courtyard. **Topics:** Library redesign, graffiti, rats, West Nile Virus spraying, and more (see meeting agenda on Page 1). Membership and meetings are open to all residents of Mid-Cambridge.

**M-C NEWS**  
**P.O. Box 907**  
**Cambridge, MA 02238**

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Wednesday, May 16**