

# M-C News

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

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## Longfellow Council and Community School face uncertain future

### M-C Neighborhood stands to lose valuable resource

The future of the Longfellow Neighborhood Council and its popular Community School is in jeopardy, as the 40-year-old program will be without a place to conduct its programs when the Longfellow School building closes this fall. If the Council and Community School are closed, M-C would be the only area within the city without a Council or Community School.

Mid-Cambridge residents concerned about this possibility should let Sam Seidel and Ken Reeves, both M-C residents, and other City Council members know that this will be a great loss for our neighborhood (email them all at [council@cambridgema.gov](mailto:council@cambridgema.gov)). Budget meetings for the Human Services Department and School Department will be held on May 11 and May 12, respectively (go to <http://www.cambridgema.gov/> for more info). All citizens can speak at the meetings and should request specific information about the future of the Neighborhood Council.

### Longfellow closing in September

The School Department plans to close the school at 359 Broadway from September 2011 until at least the fall of 2012, when it will become a "swing school" for several of the city's elementary schools that are slated to temporarily close for renovations over the next decade.

This summer the Longfellow Neighborhood Council will continue to run its programs out of the Longfellow building, according to director Penelope Kleespies, but city officials currently have no plan to house the program elsewhere come fall. Although the Council and Community School is administered by the city's Department of Human Service Programs, the School Department provides space for the program in its school buildings.

The Longfellow building has served as the home of the Mid-Cambridge neighborhood community school since it began in the late 1960s. Thousands of neighborhood adults and children have participated in its programs, including a weekend Ski Trip every year since 1977, year-round music lessons for adults and children, a soon-to-be-published Oral History book about the M-C neighborhood,

and children's programs held in Hancock and Maple Avenue parks.

Although the Longfellow has not been used as an elementary school since 2003 when it was closed due to declining enrollment, the former school has found new uses. It served as the main library during its renovation, and for the past two years it has housed the ninth grade class of Cambridge Rindge and Latin School while that school was being renovated. Now a number of other elementary school buildings are also in need of renovation, so in the fall of 2012 one of these schools will be  
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## Annual meeting features talk on native plants

This year's annual meeting of the Association is set for Wednesday, May 18, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Swiss House (the Consulate of Switzerland) located at 420 Broadway, corner of Ellery and Broadway.

Claudia Thompson, executive director of Grow Native Massachusetts, will explain why our choice of plants matter, and how native plants contribute to healthy soils and ecosystem biodiversity. A naturalist and ecologist who has spent her career working for environmental and conservation organizations, she will help us understand what plants are native to Cambridge and why the difference between native and non-native plants is very important for all kinds of food and landscape plants. Her talk will be of interest to everyone who cares about the creatures that visit and live in our neighborhood.

Swiss House became part of Mid-Cambridge in the late 1990s, occupying the former Sage's Grocery space, across the street from the public library. This will be an excellent opportunity to get to know our neighbors better! The Consulate of Switzerland, known as swissnex Boston, was the first foreign representation of Switzerland dedicated primarily to education, research, innovation, art and design.

### Coordinating Committee Election

Thompson's presentation will be followed by the annual business meeting and election of coordinating committee members. During the MCNA annual meeting, the membership will elect the 2011-2012 members of the Coordinating Committee (CC). The CC, the MCNA board, meets monthly to manage the overall business of  
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## Future of Neighborhood Council & Community School

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moved into the Longfellow building while their building is being renovated. At this time which school that will be has not been announced, but the plan is to cycle the elementary schools through the Longfellow, so that for the next 10 years or so the Longfellow will be occupied with these temporary elementary schools.

### It's time to act

In 2003, when the Longfellow Elementary School closed as part of the School Department restructuring, we almost suffered dual blows with the potential loss of the council and community school, but the residents of the neighborhood got together and lobbied the City Council to keep our community school program. Now there is talk that the Longfellow Council might be orphaned and funding cut due to the closing of the school. We need to act if we want to keep this valuable resource. All of the other neighborhoods in the city have similar neighborhood councils, and the Longfellow Council serving our M-C neighborhood has always been among the most active councils in the city. The council meets the city's published goals for community building.

The residents of Mid-Cambridge have the right to be informed of the School Department's plans for this building. The Community School has had its home there for over 40 years, and the Longfellow's popular basketball court is open for use by the general public, and is not just there for school use.

If you are concerned about the future of the Longfellow Neighborhood Council and its Community School, please reach out to the city councilors and to the MCNA at [www.mcna.org](http://www.mcna.org) to voice your opinion. You can email Sam at [sseidel@cambridgema.gov](mailto:sseidel@cambridgema.gov) and Ken at [kreeves@cambridgema.gov](mailto:kreeves@cambridgema.gov).

## Harvard museums construction updates

The Harvard Art Museums are renovating, restoring, and expanding their current facilities at 32 Quincy Street to facilitate the centralization of the collections, galleries, and curatorial staff of its three museums—the Fogg Museum, the Busch-Reisinger Museum, and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum. The new state-of-the-art facility will provide far greater access to the museum's world-class collection for the community and enhance the museums' public outreach efforts.

In terms of construction at the site, demolition activities are nearing completion and the project team has started excavation and construction on the earth retention system (slurry wall). These activities will continue

through the calendar year and possibly into the first few months of 2012. Other activities scheduled for 2011 include erecting a site crane and possibly some steel work. The daily detours on Prescott Street will continue for a couple of weeks into mid-May. Final completion of the project remains on schedule for late 2013.

### GSD buildings to get upgrade

The Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) is working to determine the capital needs of its properties located at 40 and 42 Kirkland Street and 20 Sumner Road. They have begun to perform general maintenance, cleaning and standard landscaping. Currently, fire alarms are being installed. There have been and will be some occasional meetings at the properties.

The GSD plans to eventually upgrade the building facades to better reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhood and improve the landscaping. There are no plans to expand the footprints of the buildings. The extent of each building's interior renovations will depend upon the findings of the capital needs assessments. Occupancy and use as work space and small group meetings is anticipated in September of 2011.

The university invites neighborhood residents to take advantage of all Harvard's offerings, including its museums, drama, arts, sports and science. Some highlights of upcoming programs include Harvard Museum of Natural History's Harry Potter Scavenger Hunt and the next Monthly Observatory night scheduled for May 19. For more information on these and other events and programs, please go to [www.community.harvard.edu](http://www.community.harvard.edu).

## MCNA meeting and election

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the association, discuss approaches to pending neighborhood issues, plan for neighborhood meetings and prepare our newsletter.

Of the current members, nine are running for re-election: George Bossarte, Francis (Fritz) Donovan, Elizabeth Gombosi, Debby Knight, Frankie Lieberman, Margaret (Tuny) McMahan, Joan Pickett, John Pitkin, and Christopher Robinson. Two current CC members, Karen Carmean and long time member David Szlag, have decided not to run again this year, and their support and contributions to the committee will be missed.

Seeking to join the CC for the first time is Bette Davis, a longtime neighborhood resident who has also submitted nomination papers which were due April 27. As there are 10 candidates for 11 positions, there will be a vacancy at least until the newly elected CC holds its first meeting in June. At that time according to the MCNA charter the CC members can elect a candidate to serve until the next membership election. Expressions of interest in filling this vacant seat should be directed to Joan Pickett at [jpickett@mcna.org](mailto:jpickett@mcna.org).

## Spring happenings

### Gardening events

The Spring 2011 **Mid-Cambridge Plant Swap** will be held on Saturday May 7, 12 noon to 2 p.m. at Fayette Park (near the corner of Broadway and Fayette Street across from former Longfellow School). Rain date—in case of downpour only—is Sunday, May 8, 12-2.

Bring anything that's growing in too much abundance in your garden. Elegant packaging is not required, but please do write down the names of plants. We expect to have perennials, biennial seedlings, seeds, indoor plants, catalogs, pots, and lots of "whatever." Feel free to just come, chat with neighbors, and talk gardening.

**Urban Gardening Seminar**, Saturday, May 21, 10 to 11:30 a.m., at the Cambridge Main Library on Broadway, in the conference room. Options for urban home gardening in yards, containers, roofs, wherever! Three speakers will offer lots of info and ideas, including Q&A time. Sponsored by city of Cambridge. Free.

**The Mid-Cambridge Gardeners' Listserv** now has about 100 people on it. It's a way to keep swapping all year, ask for gardening advice, hear about resources and events. There is also a new Listserv for gardening and food. To join these groups, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MidCambridgeGardeners/>

### Swiss to host GoGreen events

The Consulate of Switzerland (swissnex Boston) is promoting energy efficiency with events for all ages during the Cambridge GoGreen month of May.

Saturday, May 7 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., kids and parents will be treated to **Smarter Living – Build your own House** with educational workshops and fun giveaways at swissnex Boston, 420 Broadway.

From May 9 through May 22, the Swiss traveling exhibition **Smarter Living – The 2000 Watt Society** will be on display at the Cambridge Public Library, encouraging new understanding of energy efficiency as a key to sustainable development. The "2000 Watt Society" is a radical model of efficient, high-quality living being promoted by the Swiss Council of the Federal Institute of Technology. Energy consumption currently ranges from 12,000 watts per capita in the US to 6,000 in Europe and 5,000 in Switzerland. The Council aims to move Switzerland toward a 2000 watts-per-person goal by dramatically improving energy efficiency of all aspects of life, without reducing the Swiss standard of living. This exhibition presents the state of affairs in sustainable construction, demonstrates a diverse range of solutions, and seeks to motivate architects, investors and contractors to accept

the vision of the 2,000-watt society as a challenge for architecture and design.

A special **Smarter Living–Expo** evening at the library on Tuesday, May 17 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. offers the chance to learn more about sustainable living from local and Swiss experts. See [swissnexboston.com](http://swissnexboston.com) to RSVP and obtain further details on these events.

### Summer fun in the parks

The Longfellow Neighborhood Council and Community School presents "Park Days 2011," running from June 13 to August 5, and includes the following events and programs:

**Mornings in the Parks:** 10 a.m. to 12 noon, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at Hancock Street Park at Hancock and Centre Streets. This free summer program also runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 to noon, at Maple Avenue Park. The morning sessions consist of simple craft and play activities, such as chalk drawings, face painting, bubbles and music. It is designed for young children and their families. Please note: The program is cancelled on rainy days. There is no program on Monday, July 4.

**Thursday evening dessert and concert:** 6 to 8 p.m. at Hancock Street Park. Potluck desserts and family entertainments on the following Thursday evenings: June 23, July 7, July 14, July 21, and July 28.

#### Community School Music Program

The Longfellow Community School offers private music lessons for adults and children, including piano, voice, flute, recorder, and recorder ensembles. Piano teachers are Harvey Diamond and Mihoko Abe; Penelope Kleespies teaches recorder. Classes are held Monday through Friday; please call to arrange a lesson time. The fee is \$125 for seven lessons.

The Longfellow Neighborhood Council and Community School is in the Longfellow School building at 359 Broadway. To register for classes or for more information, contact Penelope Kleespies, director, at 617-349-6260, or e-mail [pkleespies@cambridgema.gov](mailto:pkleespies@cambridgema.gov).

### Get this newsletter on email!

If you would like to get this newsletter via email -- plus stay on top of the latest news of upcoming events and happenings in the neighborhood--just send an email to [membership@mcna.org](mailto:membership@mcna.org) with your name and email address.

News notices are sent periodically directly from MCNA; no third parties are involved.

## CRLS renovation to be completed by September

Residents of Mid-Cambridge will be happy to learn that the construction of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School renovation project is on schedule for substantial completion by the start of school in September.

Phase 1 work on the exterior is nearly completed, while Phase 2 interior work is well under way. Items on the punch list for this phase include: mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection systems. Phase 3 completion of the project is scheduled for early July. This will consist of exterior landscaping and traffic calming. The contractor will remain onsite while this

work is being done.

Neighbors, especially direct abutters who have been inconvenienced by the loss of one lane on Broadway, as well as a portion of the sidewalk, will be relieved to hear that the general contractor plans to remove their headquarters from its current location on Broadway to a smaller trailer back at its original site on Felton Street in the near future.

Michael Black is the project manager for the city. He will respond to all written and verbal communication and is best contacted at: [mblack@cambridgema.gov](mailto:mblack@cambridgema.gov).

### NEIGHBORHOOD CALENDAR

**MCNA Annual Meeting, Wednesday, May 18, 7 to 9 p.m.**, at Swiss House, 420 Broadway, corner of Ellery. See Page 1 for details.

**Mid-Cambridge Plant Swap, Saturday, May 7, 12 noon to 2 p.m.**, at Fayette Park (off Fayette near the corner of Broadway). Rain date: Sunday, May 8. For details, see Page 3.

**Climate Change Week in Cambridge, May 13-21.** The week kicks off with a forum on Friday, May 13, 7:30 p.m., *Climate Change: Is Green Consumption a Solution?* with Heather Rogers, author of *Green Gone Wrong*. First Parish Church, 1446 Mass. Ave., Harvard Square. The finale is a Climate ActionFest on Saturday, May 21, noon-3 p.m., fair with practical info for individuals to stop climate change, at Cambridge College, 1000 Mass. Ave. Info on other events is at [cceag.org/climateweekevents](http://cceag.org/climateweekevents).

**The M-C News** is published by the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association and the Longfellow Neighborhood Council. *Editor:* Paula Lovejoy. *Reporters:* Joan Pickett, Chris Robinson, Helen Snively, Paula Lovejoy, George Bossarte, Fritz Donovan. The MCNA does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

**M-C NEWS**  
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**Annual Meeting**  
**May 18, 7-9 p.m.**  
**Swiss House**