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Mayor Maher, Members of Council, friends, my name is Eva Martin Blythe. I am here representing the YWCA Cambridge along with a delegation of staff, Board of Trustees members and supporters to comment on City Manager's agenda item #11, "a communication relative to the City's collaboration with the YWCA Cambridge and its Family Shelter..."

The YWCA Cambridge is the oldest and one of the largest providers of housing for women in the Cambridge area. One of our housing programs, a shelter for homeless families, began operating about 1986. Initially the program was co-located between the Tanner Residence, our Single Room Occupancy building, and its current site at 3 Bigelow Street, in a building that was built in 1869. Since 2005, the Family Shelter has operated exclusively at the Bigelow St. location, sheltering 10 previously homeless families at any given time.

Some members of Council have responded to our invitations in the past to visit the Family Shelter. If you have visited the Shelter you have seen the "empowering women" portion of our mission at work. You will have seen a compassionate and caring staff led by Shelter Director, Trudy Bartlett, offer guidance, counseling and sometimes tough love, to our residents to help them regain or develop life skills that will enable them to live independently once they leave the shelter. The MA Department of Housing & Community (DHCD) points to our Family Shelter as an example of what a successful Shelter program looks like.

Funding for our Family Shelter program comes from DHCD to the City of Cambridge and you, in turn, contract with the YWCA Cambridge to deliver the service. As noted previously, we do so at 3 Bigelow Street in a building owned by the City of Cambridge. The building is in dire

need of renovations. For the last few years we have been working with City Manager Rossi, Asst. City Manager, Ellen Semenoff and her staff, and the DPW to develop a workable plan for the renovations. Unlike the occupied renovations that took place at our Tanner Residence, consensus is that it is impossible to renovate 3 Bigelow while the residents continue to live there. Moreover, a recent visit from the City's Commissioner of Public Works indicates that the condition of the building is far worse than we ever imagined; and, the building infrastructure and systems may not even withstand the coming winter. So, very quickly we have developed a relocation plan for our residents in cooperation with the aforementioned Cambridge City officials, Cambridge Housing Authority, DHCD and others, that calls for the building to be completely vacated on or before December 11, 2015. We will be relocating some of our Family Shelter residents into Tanner Residence where a few vacant rooms exist. Others who have recently-acquired housing vouchers will move into permanent housing elsewhere. We have to downsize the shelter. We will continue to look for another temporary location that will enable us to shelter 10 families again but, for now, in typical YWCA fashion, we will make the best of what we have to work with.

We have developed and are managing a clearly thought-out transition plan. The YWCA Cambridge does not want to stop providing shelter for homeless families and I am sure that the City of Cambridge does not want to lose this extremely important service either.

We are doing our part, and we come to you this evening seeking your assurance that the City of Cambridge will continue to support our Shelter services in the short and the long term.

Renovation of the Shelter will not happen overnight. We need to know that Council supports

this initiative so that when the renovation is completed we will be able to return to the Bigelow Street location, to a much improved facility where we will continue to deliver high-quality programs and services to homeless adults and their children.

Thank you.