

**Cambridge City Council Meeting, April 1, 2013**

Carol O'Hare's Comments re Noise Ordinance & Pollution – Awaiting Report No. 13-25

The City needs to be proactive about noise pollution.

From Wikipedia (footnotes omitted)

"Noise pollution" affects both health and behavior. Unwanted sound (noise) can damage psychological health. Noise pollution can cause annoyance and aggression, hypertension, high stress levels, tinnitus, hearing loss, sleep disturbances, and other harmful effects. Furthermore, stress and hypertension are the leading causes to health problems. . . .

High noise levels can contribute to cardiovascular effects and exposure to moderately high levels during a single eight-hour period causes a statistical rise in blood pressure of five to ten points and an increase in stress, and vasoconstriction leading to the increased blood pressure noted above, as well as to increased incidence of coronary artery disease."

The City is keenly sensitive to remedying pollution and protecting the environment, devoting and directing many resources toward averting and solving environmental problems, except for one that Councillor vanBeuzekom has raised:

Environmental Concerns Addressed, for example:

- Green building standards for large development/LEED
- Zoning to encourage green roofs
- Zoning to facilitate use of passive energy efficiency measures such as exterior walls insulation, overhangs and sun-shading devices
- Solar energy systems
- Wind energy systems
- Stretch Energy Code for higher standards for energy efficiency in building projects
- Recycling Program
- CitySmart
- Water Pollution prevention
- Air pollution prevention: tree planting, tree-canopy assessment, possible deployment of electric vehicles, retrofitting diesel vehicles

**But** the insidious and increasingly disturbing problem of intrusive and unceasing noise is given short shrift by the City. The Noise Ordinance and its Noise Standards need serious updating. More personnel and noise-measuring equipment need to be devoted to this growing problem, including and especially during non-business hours.

Andrea Boyer, the City's entire Noise staff, is a dedicated, knowledgeable professional. But, she can't do-it-all! Neither the Police Dept. nor ISD seem to have any rigorous way of addressing noise issues that regularly arise from outdoor events and from building mechanical systems. In the Big Scheme of Things, noise issues are low-down on their priority list, which is natural for the Police, who really do have more immediately compelling matters to attend to.

Just this weekend, there was what must have been a fun and delightful "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Easter Egg Hunt 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM Saturday, March 30, 2013 @ Riverside Park sponsored by Amigos/Cambridgeport & King Community Schools invite you to their Second Annual Easter Egg Hunt  
Children must be accompanied by adults  
Free and open to the public  
Bring your Easter baskets!



But, here's the rub: The loudspeakers blared unintelligible, unappealing, disquieting (in the double sense of the word), intermittent bass sounds at least .5 miles to the east of the event. (Not that it would have been better if the noise was intelligible.)

After about an hour, I phoned the Police Dept. to express my concern. They sent an Officer(s) to check it out. When I phoned back at least ½ hour time later because the noise hadn't stopped, I was told that it had been checked out and the police officer(s) thought the sound wasn't problematic. They offered to come to my house. I said I could hear it from ½ mile away so it was problematic from my perspective.

It seems that, as long as an outdoor event is approved, it is presumed to pass the sound test, without any sound testing, nearby or from afar. It's entirely dependent on the hearing acuity and noise sensitivity of officers who visit the sound source at a given time.

In the land of Harvard, MIT and technology heaven, this seems like a very unsophisticated way to deal with such a problem.