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**By HAND and by email**

Cambridge City Council  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**Re: RSS feeds on City websites / Manager's Agenda #10 / AR #13-33**

Dear Madam Mayor and City Councillors:

Thanks for your continued attention. The manager's response on this issue is a marked improvement from previous, but it's not *quite* there yet. He is to be commended for including the City CIO's reply.

RSS, simply put, is an easy way to *see when a list of things changes*. While those "things" can be news items, they can also be anything else: calendar items, Council orders, Manager communications, Zoning petitions, Special Permit applications, License Commission minutes, published documents for each of the city's hundreds of committees, etc., etc.

If a list appears on a City web page, especially a list of downloadable documents (PDF or otherwise), it should also be available as RSS.

Then, anyone who cares about new items on that list, whatever they are, may simply subscribe and not have to periodically check a web page, be it hourly, daily, weekly, or monthly. Human beings are bad at repetitive tasks. RSS is a tool to make computers excel at them.

Ms. Hart's response suggests RSS feeds might be limited to "news items." If so, that would be a terrible error. News items are necessarily secondary sources. They are one step removed from the primary source, and they are delayed and filtered. The whole point of RSS is to make it easier to find new *primary* sources on the City's web site. It solves the "Oh, I put that on the web page last week, didn't you see it?" problem. It turns *pull* into *push*.

Very truly yours,

  
John A. Hawkinson

Cc: Donna Lopez, Interim City Clerk, for inclusion in the record  
Mary Hart, Chief Information Officer (*via email only*)