



City of Cambridge Police Department

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Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner

Richard C. Rossi
City Manager

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager

From: Robert C. Haas, Police Commissioner

Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Ref.: City Council Order #13, dated, November 23, 2015

Dear Sir:

As requested, I am responding to City Council Order #13, dated November 23, 2015, which relates to providing citizens with a safe space to trade goods that will, in turn, reduce the chances of crimes occurring while trades are happening.

For background, online shopping and exchanging has become increasingly popular with the proliferation of the Internet. Residents are utilizing online services such as Craigslist, Close5 and OfferUp to buy, sell and trade goods with strangers – in many cases – who live in the area. However, the convenience associated with this activity can lead to safety concerns for the buyer or seller.

According to a June report in the Wall Street Journal, approximately 70 police departments across the country have created “safe zones,” which are secure locations for buyers and sellers to make exchanges. In most cases, these departments have designated a parking location that is under 24-hour video surveillance for the public to meet and conduct their transaction.

With parking at a premium in Cambridge, particularly in and around the Robert W. Healy Public Safety Facility, the Cambridge Police Department is recommending that the lobby area of the building serve as a safe venue for residents who want security while conducting these transactions.

The Cambridge Police Department, through a multi-layered social media, news media and community relations campaign, would encourage residents to use the lobby to arrange a meeting if they have any safety concerns when meeting with another person to complete a transaction previously agreed to online. All members of the Police Department, and especially those assigned to the Front Desk and Records Unit, would be advised that this activity may occur at any time.

The Police Department will have no role in these transactions. However, the Department can provide some sense of comfort as they occur because the lobby provides a secure and safe environment.

Over the next 2-3 weeks we will focus on promoting this campaign and notifying members of the department of this initiative to ensure the effective implementation of this program.

We have set the target start date for January 11, 2016.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert C. Haas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "H".

Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner