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Carol O'Hare
172 Magazine Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139-4744

April 9, 2012

Mayor Davis and City Councilors
City of Cambridge
City Hall
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Re: Cambridge Redevelopment Authority – So many Questions!

Dear Mayor Davis and City Councilors:

It has recently come to light, in significant part through excellent investigative reporting and editorial decisions by Cambridge Chronicle, that the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority's (CRA) actions for a significant period of time have not passed the "sniff test" in many respects:

- no modern-day public notice of CRA Board meetings, if any;
- no web-site;
- not even the possibility of convening a quorum for official action because there have been only 2 CRA Board members for some time;
- no CRA Board meetings in more than two years;
- CRA staff's final decisions on projects within the CRA's Board's domain without any evidence of the Authority's right to delegate or of any purported delegation; and
- needless to say, minimal, if any, public involvement in CRA decisions and actions.

As you all know, the signage approval matter is the one I'm most familiar with. In 2010, there was a drawn-out and dispiriting public process that led to the public and widely publicized outcry and eventual rescission of the Building Identification Sign zoning amendment that would have permitted high, illuminated signs visible from the River. Despite that effort, initiated at least in part by Microsoft, represented by Jim Rafferty, Esq., in recent months a high, illuminated Microsoft sign appeared instead at the gateway to Kendall Sq., facing the Longfellow Bridge and the River. It seems that the CRA's staff allowed this through via an entirely private process, notwithstanding that dramatic history!

Who knows how many other projects were handled in this manner?

So, I respectfully suggest that, if and when the Council appoints additional members of the CRA Board to constitute a quorum once again, you assure that the CRA Board will institute a proper public process with proper public notice before ratifying or purporting to retroactively legalize prior CRA approvals and disapprovals that should have had Board review and a public process but did not. In other words, please don't just paper over these ~~recent~~ actions disheartening.

Respectfully,

Carol O'Hare

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Cc: Robert Healey, City Manager
Dona Lopez, City Clerk – Please file this letter with the Official Record