



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 8, OCTOBER 2009

Dear Friends:

Winter appears to be coming early this year — as of mid-October, we have already experienced our first snowfall! While it has come a little earlier than we expected, it does signal that the colder weather is upon us, the holiday season is nearly here, and it's time to get ready to break out the heavy winter clothing.

But there are also more practical matters that we must all be mindful of. First and foremost, along with the winter cold comes increased opportunities for slippery streets and sidewalks. Please be mindful of the sidewalks in front of your homes; if you live in a house, you are responsible for shoveling and sanding the area in front of your house so that pedestrians can safely pass. If you live in an apartment and notice that the sidewalks and stairways are slippery, please notify your landlords or building managers at once, so that they may deal with the issue. If you have elderly neighbors, please consider checking in with them to see if they need assistance with clearing snow and ice. If you have any further questions or concerns regarding this, you may also contact the Mayor's Office during normal business hours, and we will put you in touch with the appropriate City personnel. The winter can be a fun, heartwarming period, and we owe it to each other to make sure that we all stay safe during the colder months.

Another issue to be mindful of is where you park your car during inclement weather. If you have questions about whether your car might be towed during a snow storm, please call the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department at (617) 349-4700 to ask whether your street is considered a tow zone during a snow emergency. Remember that the signs with information regarding a particular street may be spaced out, and it is your duty as a Cambridge resident to make sure that you are aware of all parking rules and regulations. By being proactive, by paying attention, and by working with the City, I am certain that we can reduce the number of towed vehicles and parking fines that are issued this winter!

September 23: Meeting of Committee to review text for Prince Hall Memorial — In September, we once again celebrated the birthday of abolitionist, educator, and civil rights pioneer Prince Hall. To mark the occasion, I held a small commemorative event for the Revolutionary War Era figure, which was attended by masons from all over the country. As you are hopefully aware, two years ago I submitted a policy order in the City Council calling on the City Manager to find an appropriate place on the Cambridge Common to erect a monument to honor this important historical figure. Since that time, we have chosen the perfect spot on the Common, and a sculptor (Cambridge resident Ted Clausen) was selected to build the sculpture. Mr. Clausen's design was approved by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the Cambridge Arts Council, which marked a milestone in the realization of this project. On September 23, I met with a group of people to discuss the wording of the sculpture. The words on this sculpture should be timeless and should speak not only to Prince Hall and his legacy, but also to the ever-improving nature of our great democracy.



Cambridge Mayor E. Denise Simmons

Photograph courtesy of Stephanie Mitchell

September 24: Special City Council Meeting on Climate Change— The Special Meeting of the City Council on the Climate Emergency was called for by a Policy Order adopted by the City Council on May 17, 2009. The Policy Order, which I co-sponsored, called upon the City Manager to ensure that the City's responses to the climate crisis were commensurate with the crisis we face. Climate change is a gravely serious matter, and the futures of our children and grandchildren will be directly impacted by the actions we take right now. The Special Meeting was well attended, a testament of how seriously residents of Cambridge view this matter. Although much can be done to reduce the carbon foot print of our city, we still have a great deal of work to do to change habits and reverse some of the damage done to our planet. One way that Cambridge has responded has been through turning the City Hall Annex (at 344 Broadway) into an environmentally friendly building. It was outfitted with the latest advancements in Green design when it was remodeled in 2005. In addition to saving the City money, the green design results in a 43% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

September 26: Inauguration of Mayor Sheila Doyle Russell Youth Center—I was pleased to participate in the inauguration of the Sheila Doyle Russell Youth Center, a tribute the second woman to serve our city as mayor. The center includes a full-size gym and a fitness room with exercise equipment; a teaching kitchen; a computer learning and homework center; a multipurpose performance room with a platform stage; an arts and crafts room; an art wall for exhibitions; and a community meeting room and open lounge areas. The performance space includes state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment and a drop-down viewing screen. Cambridge recognizes that we need to invest in our kids, and with the Sheila Doyle Russell Youth Center, you can see that we're trying to provide our kids with the very best foundation we can!

September 26: Family Day at Danehy Park— Over the past several years, the goal of fostering a sense of community in Cambridge has ranked high on the list of City Council goals. Family Day at Danehy Park provided a perfect forum for this. Since its inception fourteen years ago, Family Day at Danehy Park has become a Cambridge tradition. This year, as in previous years, the day was filled with food, arts and crafts, and music for every musical taste. The attendance was exceptional. My special thanks go to everyone who worked long and hard days to make this day the success that it was.

October 1: Human Services Information Fair— Since becoming Mayor, I have worked hard to build bridges with different constituencies in the city. For example, I have reached out to Cambridge churches and other faith-based groups by holding a monthly breakfast with the clergy. This has been a great help in fostering open lines of communication between the City and our valued community partners who help provide human services. Since the clergy members are regularly asking me about the range of services provided by the City, I decided to host a human services information fair at City Hall. During the fair, numerous staffers from the Department of Human Service Programs spoke about the various programs and services we offer. I also invited some community-based human/social service providers to attend the fair. The response to this event was fantastic, and I was happy to help share the information that helps all of us help the people across our city.

October 2: Constituent drop-in hours— Since becoming Mayor, I have held open constituent drop-in hours every Friday from 8:30—9:30 am. During these drop-in hours, constituents can come to my office without an appointment and meet with me to discuss anything they wish to. Whether it is housing issues, employment concerns, economic troubles, or just a simple hello, I am happy to meet with you to have a little conversation and see how I can be of service to you.

October 5: Vigil for victims of Domestic Violence—October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic violence touches the lives of Americans of all ages, leaving a devastating impact on people from all walks of life. A family's home is no place for fear, hopelessness, and desperation. In commemoration of those who have experienced domestic violence, I briefly adjourned today's City Council meeting so that my colleagues and I could participate in a commemorative vigil organized by the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women. The vigil was appropriately somber, and a reminder that we all can play a role in stamping out Domestic Violence by uniting and reaching out to those in need.

October 7: Latino Heritage Month celebration— "*E Pluribus Unum*," "Out of One, Many," reads the motto of the United States of America. This motto not only highlights the diversity of this country, it also posits that we draw our strength from our great diversity. Over the course of my administration, I have tried to celebrate the diversity in Cambridge with a number of different events. I have hosted a celebration for Saint Patrick's Day, Italian Heritage Month, Black History Month, and Haitian Flag Day. On October 7, I hosted our first ever celebration of Latino Heritage Month right inside City Hall. The event was well attended, and it featured great food, a live band, and a keynote address by Mr. Juan Vega (the CEO of Cento Latino). This was a great start to what I hope will be an annual celebration for the fantastic contributions of our Latino members of the community.

October 8: National Coming Out Day Event at Suffolk University — While some members of the GLBT community have been able to live their lives in a proud and open manner, we have still not reached the day when EVERYONE can live free of the fear and persecution that has historically accompanied coming out. That is why we celebrate National Coming Out Day every year — to promote an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion, and to lay the ground work so that everyone WILL one day be able to be out and proud. On October 8, I spoke at a National Coming out Day event at Suffolk University. During my comments, I recalled my own fear and hesitation about coming out as a lesbian. I noted that my children were quite hurt when I was “outed” by a columnist in a conservative local paper. I encouraged the students to be open about their sexuality, because this openness empowers others to do the same. We all likely know someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, and it is imperative that we try to create a world where we are not judged, shunned, or condemned simply because of how we live our lives. We have made great strides in the 40 years since the Stonewall riots, but we’re not there yet.

Ongoing — One of the ongoing concerns in my office has been in dealing with the issue of homelessness. We live in one of the richest societies in the history of the world, yet we still see people on our streets with no place to call home. To address this problem, my office has been in regular contact with our colleagues at the Cambridge Multi Service Center. We often receive people who are coming in off the streets, suffering from economic hardship, mental and physical health issues, drug and alcohol dependency, or some other issue that has contributed to their situation. I always keep in mind that this person is likely somebody’s son or daughter, sister or brother, mother or father, or friend. We will most often connect these individuals with the folks at the Cambridge Multi Service Center (located at 19 Brookline Street), where they will be interviewed, triaged, and accessed for service. The Multi Service Center staff are dedicated, caring professionals who know the ins and outs of placing homeless people in shelters, direct them towards appropriate medical help, assist them with searching for jobs, and placing them on a path towards a better life. The Multi Service Center will often work closely with independent community partners such as Just-A-Start, Bread & Jam, the Salvation Army, CASCAP, and many others. As we head into the winter months, all of these services are going to be more needed than ever, as we seek to prevent people from having to sleep on the streets during the frigid weather.

Ongoing: Housing Issues and the Cambridge Housing Authority — In addition to assisting and referring the homeless community, my staff and I also spend a good deal of time working with people who are under-housed and working with the Cambri-

dge Housing Authority. The CHA is a valued partner in trying to house the many, many people who are in need of subsidized housing. Over the course of my administration, not a week has gone by where we weren’t working with *someone* who has sought CHA housing. For those entering into the CHA system, or who are already in it, there are some important things to consider: for starters, it is VITALLY IMPORTANT that you ask the proper questions, and that you provide all pertinent information, when you are initially signing up for CHA housing. The process for selecting which housing to choose, and which waitlists are most appropriate, can be daunting. IT IS OK TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE in filling out the forms. You can either ask to make an appointment with “Johnny Z,” who has open hours on Thursdays from 10 am—2 pm, or you can ask to work with people at the Multi Service Center. If you have medical issues, it is important to tell the CHA representatives, as this may impact the type of housing that you should sign up for. If you have mobility issues, you must tell the CHA representatives. Remember, they are not mind-readers, they are not familiar with your history, and they may not know to ask specific questions if you do not give them a reason to. Whenever you are providing them with information or making any sort of request, always err on the side of providing more information and context!

Also important: it is always good to keep all CHA documents organized and in one place. It is strongly recommended that you contact the CHA any time your contact information changes, or any time you experience a significant event that may make it difficult for you to stay in touch. If you are going to undergo surgery, for example, you may wish to notify the CHA that you are expected to be in recovery for however long a time that may be. The CHA tends to communicate exclusively via the U.S. mail, and if they send you mail and do not hear from you, you may lose your place in line. It is significantly more difficult to correct any misunderstandings or missed communications weeks or months after the fact, than to plan ahead and give them important information up front!!

Ongoing: Parking In The City— I mentioned this on the front of the newsletter, but it bears repeating: as citizens of Cambridge, it is your responsibility to make sure you are familiar with all the parking rules and regulations. Whether it is learning which days feature street cleaning, which streets you should avoid during snow emergencies, how many consecutive days one can park with a guest permit — the information is readily available on the City’s website, or by calling the Traffic and Parking Department with a request for information. It is far better to ask questions up front and to know the laws, then to try to appeal after you have received a ticket.

Ongoing; Central Square Re-envisioning — One of my ongoing concerns has been in paying attention to the evolution of Central Square. For many years, Central Square has been a topic of great debate; some people see it as an area that is slowly gaining steam as a funky, interesting part of the City that features enticing restaurants, dynamic nightlife, and an exotic mix of boutiques and coffee shops. Others see it as an echo of the thriving urban center that it was many decades ago. Some see promise in places like the Middle East, The Clear Conscience Café, and Central Kitchen, while others see empty store fronts and unkempt sidewalks. I happen to see an area of Cambridge that is full of potential, and full of life — but also a place that is still looking for greater community support and for a universally-recognized “brand” or personality. To that end, I have been working with our Community Development Department to discuss possibilities for stimulating economic development, small business growth, and stronger ties within the local business community. I have also been in regular contact with the Cambridge Police to ensure that proper attention is being paid to the area. As so many of the local social service agencies are located in and around Central Square, I am mindful of the fact that the area is also a popular meeting spot for those who take advantage of these services. It is important to remember that Cambridge is a diverse, inclusive city, and that means that EVERYONE has a right to walk our streets, sit on our benches, and be socially active. I remain committed to working with the appropriate community partners in continuing to revitalize Central Square, and I see great things in store for this area of Cambridge in the years ahead.

Ongoing: City Safety—Over the summer months, I convened the first in a series of meetings between the Cambridge Police, the Cambridge Housing Authority, and representatives from several realty management companies. The purpose for this meeting was to share information about ongoing safety concerns, and to try to join forces to prevent crimes from recurring. The Cambridge Police have been very focused in trying to spread information throughout the “hot spots” where violence erupted last summer, going door-to-door to share information with citizens, and asking residents to share any pertinent information that might help the police disrupt criminal activity. These meetings shall continue throughout the winter months, and I would ask that we all do our part in sharing potentially helpful information with the police.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

November 5: Police Auxiliary Celebration.

December 7: Luminary Awards Reception in the Mayor’s Parlor.

To send your thoughts to the Mayor, please detach below the bold line, insert in an envelop, and mail to MAYOR’S OFFICE, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02139. Mayor Simmons has walk-in office hours most Fridays from 8:30 A.M to 9:30 A.M. Please call 617-349-4321 to find out when the next walk-in office hours will take place.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Email _____

Comment _____
