

May 10, 2013

**Lisa Peterson**  
Commissioner

147 Hampshire Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
617-349-4800  
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Cambridge ACT  
Christ Church Cambridge  
Zero Garden Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Mses. Fontana Shulman, Carey, Moran, Jillson and Livney, and Messrs. Parker, Kerzee and Tufts:

Thank you for your letter of April 12, 2013 regarding a public restroom facility on the Cambridge Common. I appreciate your interest in addressing this issue, and your recognition of the City's concern for this issue, and for its complexity. I was very pleased to hear, at our meeting on April 3rd, that the portable toilet on the Cambridge Common has provided good benefit.

I would like to address your specific requests:

- A working group has been meeting to discuss the issue of public toilets citywide, as requested by the City Council, including one serving the Cambridge Common. In addition to the Public Works Department, this working group involves high level involvement from the City Manager's Office, the Mayor's Office, Police Department, the Public Health Department, the Department of Human Service Programs, the Historical Commission, and the Community Development Department. The working group's progress to date includes research of other communities experiences with public toilets and lessons learned, understanding where public toilets are currently, and a good discussion of goals and strategies for identifying and understanding needs and effective solutions.
- We will be engaging the community further in the discussion in the near future. We would like to invite the members of Cambridge ACT to a working group meeting to discuss this issue and hear your concerns. I will be in touch about a mutually agreeable time in the near future.
- We are specifically looking at improved signage and information on the location of restrooms available to the public.
- We are also looking specifically at the Cambridge Common and immediate area to understand where the best location for a public toilet might be and understand the

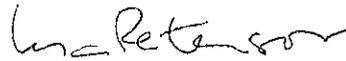


additional work that would be necessary if a toilet was installed. In addition to location of utilities, consideration needs to be given to visibility, lighting and proximity to activity.

As we discussed, our paramount concern in siting a public toilet is to ensure it is well maintained and safe. This will be a challenging issue for us to address as we move forward. However, we are committed to reaching workable solutions on this issue.

I appreciate Cambridge ACT's commitment to this issue and welcome additional questions, comments or ideas you may have.

Sincerely,



Lisa Peterson

CC: Richard Rossi, City Manager's Officer  
Robert Hass, Police  
Ellen Semonoff, DHSP  
Elizabeth Mengers, DHSP  
Claude Jacob, Public Health  
Stuart Dash, Community Development  
Elaine Thorne, Community Development  
Charles Sullivan, Historical Commission  
Matthew Nelson, Mayor's Office

April 12, 2013

Lisa Peterson  
Director of Public Works  
147 Hampshire Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Ms. Peterson,

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with us last Wednesday about the Cambridge Common restroom. We all came away from the meeting impressed by your warmth and candor, by the City's concern for the issue—and for its complexity.

We also hope you learned from the conversation of our determination to work with you to resolve this issue in an open and expeditious way.

We appreciated your frankness that “the issue” is not cost or engineering but security—as well as your telling us that there have been no neighbors or abutters who have complained in the seven months since the City placed a Porta-Potty on the north side of the Common, and that daily police patrols of the facility have reported no incidents.

We also appreciate that the City takes seriously the instructions of the City Council last December to begin an investigation of the issue of citywide needs for public restrooms, including on the Common.

Given the five months that have passed since that Council instruction, however, we regret that the City has yet to begin even preliminary hearings or appoint, let alone invite nominees, for citizen members to join City officials on the public committee that the Council has instructed should lead this investigation.

You're right, of course, that there's a need to investigate what other cities are doing about public bathrooms—something Advocates for a Common Toilet (ACT), our working group of concerned churches, civic groups, homeless groups, sports teams, parents of children who use the park, and numerous Harvard Square businesses—has already begun doing.

We're eager to share what we've learned in order to advance this process.

We also appreciate that determining exactly where to place such facilities is subject to discussion. But as Ayala Livney pointed out during the meeting, no one solution precludes another. The fact is that Harvard Square lacks public restrooms, despite the fact that City has on average eight million visitors a year.

Local businesses, as Denise Jillson of the Harvard Square Business Association remarked in the meeting, for years have recognized what a burden this is, and added that informally Harvard (in the Holyoke Center) and the Harvard Coop have kept facilities open. The Harvard Square T also has a public bathroom, but it is more often unavailable than not. None of these facilities, however, is marked in any way that indicates their whereabouts to a visitor in the Square.

You obviously have a very busy schedule, and with your new job as Deputy City Manager, no doubt there are transition issues to take into account.

We would appreciate seeing the following:

- 1) **Committee appointed:** The City appoint the commission to investigate the bathroom issue, as instructed by the City Council last December; this includes not only convening the committee and beginning public hearings, but including on the committee citizens concerned about this issue;
- 2) **Signage created:** Creation of street signs—as well as brochures and online information-- for the Harvard Square area that clearly shows where existing bathrooms are located;
- 3) **Sites for a facility identified and prepared:** Preliminary designation of sites on the Common where a facility (or facilities) could be sited, in terms of existing sewerage, water lines, electricity, etc. You told us that the \$4 million renovation of the Common does **not** include any plans for a restroom, and that at this point the City won't change those plans. This is regrettable in our view. The City could, however, at least designate sites—and create the hook-ups necessary for a later installation—during renovation at the minimum as a clear sign of its intentions to move forward.

Meanwhile, we deeply appreciate your indication that the City intends to leave in place the Porta-Potty placed on the Common last fall. That said, it is (by definition) a temporary facility—and a permanent one is needed.

We look forward to working with you as Deputy City Manager, with the new City Manager Mr. Rossi, and with the City Council to reach an expeditious and comprehensive solution to this ongoing problem.

Sincerely,

Richard Parker  
Harvard Kennedy School Faculty and  
Christ Church Cambridge Social Justice Committee

Mardi Moran  
Co-Owner of Tags Hardware and  
St. James's Episcopal Social Justice Team

Denise Jillson  
Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA)

Tom Tufts  
St. James's Episcopal Outreach Ministry

Zach Kerzee  
The Outdoor Church of Cambridge and  
Harvard Epworth-UMC

Juliet Carey  
AIDS Action Committee and  
Christ Church Cambridge Social Justice Committee

Ayala Livny  
Youth on Fire (YOF)

Valerie Fontana Shulman  
Christ Church Cambridge

On behalf of all Advocates for a Common Toilet

Please visit the website we're about to launch: [www.cambridgeact.com](http://www.cambridgeact.com)  
Direct return mail to:  
Christ Church Cambridge  
Attn: Cambridge ACT  
Zero Garden St.  
Cambridge, Ma 02138

## Public Restrooms in Cambridge Public Buildings

Location	Address	Neighborhood	Hours of Operation
Firehouse – North Cambridge- Engine 4	2029 Mass. Avenue	North Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms are inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – O'Neill Branch	70 Rindge Avenue	North Cambridge	10:00 am-8:00 pm –Mon & Wed; 10:00 am-5:00 pm Thur & Fri Closed Tuesday, Saturday & Sunday
Danehy Park	99 Sherman Street	North Cambridge/Alewife	Permanent & temporary restrooms: 7:00 am to dusk, year-round
CHA Cambridge Family Health - North	2067 Mass Avenue	North Cambridge	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Rindge Ave Pool	Rindge Ave	North Cambridge	10:00 am-7:00 pm Seasonal Summer Program
Firehouse – Taylor Sq.- Engine 8	113 Garden	North/West Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms are inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Golf Course Club House	691 Huron Ave.	West Cambridge	April 6:30 am-dusk May-Aug 5:30 am-dusk September 6:00 am-dusk October 7:30 am-dusk November 8:00 am-dusk December 9:00 am-desk
Library – Collins Branch	64 Aberdeen Ave.	West Cambridge	Mon, Tues & Fri 10:00 am-6:00 pm; Thur 1:00 pm-8:00 pm Closed Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday
Firehouse –West Cambridge- Engine 9	167 Lexington Ave.	West Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Walter Sullivan Water Treatment Plant	250 Fresh Pond Pkwy	West Cambridge	At Range's Station lobby, under clock tower down to dusk 7 days/week
Library - Boudreau Branch	245 Concord Ave	West Cambridge	Mon-Wed-Fri 10:00 am-6:00 pm, Tues 10:00 am to 8:00 pm - Closed Thurs, Sat & Sun
Library – Main	449 Broadway	Mid Cambridge Harvard Square	Monday-Thursday 9:00 am-9:00 pm Fri & Sat 9:00 am-5:00 pm Sun: 1:00 pm-5:00 pm (Seasonal)
Firehouse – Main- Fire Headquarters (Engine 1)	491 Broadway	Mid Cambridge Harvard Square	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – Central Sq.	45 Pearl St.	Central Square	Mon, Wed, Fri 10:00 am-6:00 pm Tues & Thurs 10:00 am-9:00 pm Saturday 10:00 am-2:00 pm Closed Sunday
Firehouse – Lafayette Square- Engine 2	378 Mass. Avenue	Central Square	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.

Location	Address	Neighborhood	Hours of Operation
City Hall	795 Mass. Avenue	Central Square	8:30 am- 8:00 pm Monday; 8:30 am-5:00 pm Tuesday-Thursday; 8:30 am- noon Fridays
Lombardi Building	831 Mass. Avenue	Central Square	Regular hours: 8:00 am-5:00 pm Hearing Nights 6:00 pm-10:00 pm
Multi-Service Center	5 Western Ave	Central Square	8:30 am– 8:00 pm Monday; 8:30am – 5:00 pm Tuesday-Thursday; 8:30am-noon Friday
CHA Windsor Street Health Center	119 Windsor Street	Central/Kendal Square	Open Weekdays 7:00 am-9:00 pm and Saturdays 9:00 am-3:00 pm
Firehouse – South Side Engine 6	176 River Street	South Side	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Magazine Pool	719 Memorial Drive	Charles River	10:00 am-7:00 pm Seasonal Summer Program
City Hall Annex- McCusker Building	344 Broadway	Inman Square	8:30 am- 8:00 pm Monday; 8:30 am-5:00 pm Tuesday-Thursday; 8:30 am- noon Fridays
Firehouse-Inman Sq. Engine 5	1384 Cambridge St.	Inman Square	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
CHA Cambridge Family Health	237 Hampshire Street	Inman Square	Monday: 8:30 am - 8:00 pm Tuesday - Friday: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm
CHA Cambridge Hospital Campus	1493 Cambridge Street	Inman Square	Reception area: 6:00 am -8:00 pm Emergency Department restrooms: 24/7
Coffon Building	51 Inman St	Inman Square	Monday 8:30 am-8:00 pm Tuesday-Friday 8:30 am-5:00 pm
Library – Valente Branch	826 Cambridge Street	East Cambridge	Monday & Wednesday 10:00 am-8:00 pm, Tuesday & Friday 10:00 am-6:00 pm Closed Thursday, Saturday & Sunday
Firehouse – East Cambridge- Engine 3	175 Cambridge Street	East Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – O’Connell Branch	48 Sixth Street	East Cambridge	Mon, Wed, Thurs 10:00 am-5:00 pm Tues: 10:00 am-7:30 pm Closed Friday, Saturday, Sunday
Robert W Healy Public Safety Building	125 Sixth St	East Cambridge	24 hrs/day 7 days/wk
CHA East Cambridge Health Center	163 Gore St	East Cambridge	Mon, Wed, Fri: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Tues, Thurs: 8:00 am - 8:00 pm

## Parks and Playgrounds with Public Toilets

Location	Address	Neighborhood	Hours of Operation
Ahern Field	259 Charles Street	East Cambridge	Seasonal
Cambridge Common	1500 Mass Avenue	Harvard Square	Open all year
Danehy Park	99 Sherman Street	North Cambridge	Open all year
Donnelly Field	37 Berkshire Street	East Cambridge	Seasonal
Fresh Pond Reservation		North/West Cambridge	Open all year
Hoyt Field	10 Montague Street	Central Square	Seasonal
Lindstrom Field	40 Granite Street	Charles River	Seasonal
Raymond Field	Raymond & Richdale	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Rindge Field	114 Pemberton Street	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Russell Field	82 Clifton Street	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Sennott Park	175 Broadway	Central Square	Seasonal
St. Peter's Field	99 Sherman Street	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Tobin Field	197 Vassall Lane	North Cambridge	Seasonal