



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

# MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

## YEAR-IN-REVIEW

### Dear Friends:

Welcome to the second edition of my newsletter. Looking back upon my first year in the Mayor's Office, I realize just how busy my staff and I have been in working for the people of Cambridge. In 2008, many of the difficulties and challenges facing the nation were also faced by the people of Cambridge—from rising gasoline prices and home foreclosures, to a worsening economy and the disappearance of retirement funds. I have worked hard to be attentive to your concerns resulting from this difficult time, and to try to ease some of your burdens whenever possible. The entire Cambridge government has worked extra hard to keep the City running as efficiently as possible, and we will continue to do so in 2009! As we begin a new year, we remain committed to the values that have made us the envy of other cities nationwide. We remain engaged in providing the best constituent services possible, and to building bridges and forging partnerships with communities other than our own. In the following Year-In-Review edition of my Newsletter, I wish to share some of the ways we have worked on your behalf over the past 12 months, and to let you know that we'll work just as hard in 2009.

**March: Visit From a Portuguese Delegation** - In March, I welcomed a delegation from Oeiras, Portugal, to City Hall to celebrate their new status as a Sister City of Cambridge. The delegation included the Mayor of Oeiras and senior members of his administration. We discussed ways to strengthen the relationship between our cities, especially in the areas of technology and education. We also agreed to establish a Sister City Pen Pal Program with the 5th Graders of the Fletcher-Maynard Academy, who had requested such a program, and grade school students in Oeiras. Cultural exchanges under the Sister City Program are an important investment in the future as we help promote our city as a tourist attraction.

**March: Spring & Fall Community Service Days** - I have always believed that a healthy community demands high levels of civic engagement: the notion that we have an obligation to each other, to our city, state, and country, and that we need to participate and stay engaged in the life of our community. I was instrumental in organizing the Spring and Fall Community Service days in alliance with the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. In the Spring, we worked to beautify the King School playground. In the Fall, we beautified Dana and Lafayette Park. This Spring, the bulbs we planted will blossom into beautiful flowers. Please keep an eye out for them as you enjoy the fruits of the community's labor in a stroll through the parks.

**Mayor Simmons can be reached at (617) 349-4321, or at [dsimmons@cambridgema.gov](mailto:dsimmons@cambridgema.gov). For more information, visit [www.cambridgema.gov](http://www.cambridgema.gov). Mayor Simmons has walk-in office hours every Friday from 8:30 AM—9:30 A.M.**



**Cambridge Mayor E. Denise Simmons**

**JUNE: The Annual Pride Brunch and Awards at City Hall** - On June 14, Cambridge City Hall held a brunch to celebrate the city's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. The brunch was organized by my office as part of my efforts to open City Hall to the entire Cambridge community. The brunch featured a community awards presentation to luminaries such as author Sarah Brannen, as well as various other forms of entertainment. With our inclusionary attitudes and policies, Cambridge continues to proudly lead by example.

**Summer 2008 Summer Ecology Camp** - Over the summer, I launched a 7-week summer ecology camp in partnership with Friends of Alewife Reservation, a non-profit educating the community about the Reservation. Underserved youth learned basic conservation skills like global positioning techniques, water quality testing, tree and meadow maintenances.

**SEPTEMBER: Prince Hall Memorial** - I broke Ground for Prince Hall memorial in September 2008. I then created a search committee to select an artist and a befitting memorial. I am happy to announce that the committee has chosen an artist, and work will begin on the memorial soon. While the search committee was reviewing applicants, the Cambridge City Council voted to name Prince Hall a founding father. By placing a memorial in Cambridge Commons in honor of Prince Hall, we hope to engender a national movement to get Prince Hall some long-overdue acknowledgment for his efforts in the founding of these United States.

**AUGUST: Launch of Urban Mass Green Alliance** - The mission of UMGA is to educate minority communities to the benefits of the green economy, and to provide these communities with tools to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in the green economy. UMGA hopes to leverage collaborative relationships to develop job training and placement opportunities for minorities in the green economy. Minority communities were left out of the internet boom of the early 1990's, leading to a digital gap, and the effects are palpable in our city's classrooms today. It is vitally important that minority and low-income communities enjoy the benefits of the green economy.

**SEPTEMBER: Launch of Green Jobs Task Force** - In September, the City Council unanimously approved my Council Order proposing the creation of a green jobs task force. Later in the month, the City Manager and I convened the first Green Jobs Task Force meeting. The task force is made up of a cross section of the city's residents, and includes city employees, community activists, professionals in the field, and ordinary citizens. The mission of the Task Force is to work over a period of 6-8 months to develop a green jobs policy that will link training and employment to emerging jobs in the green economy, with a special focus on making certain that the field is open to individuals who have been left out of previous employment innovations. The release of the Task Force's recommendations will be brought to your attention in the New Year

**SEPTEMBER: Launch of Mayor's Girl's and Boy's Group Initiatives** - In September, I launched initiatives to support and nurture young people toward success and leadership. 8th Grade girls from Cambridge Public Schools were invited to participate in the Mayor's Girl's Leadership Group for monthly sessions at City Hall. The purpose of these sessions is to promote leadership, advocacy, and community service awareness. My educational advisors, Lenora Jennings and Bridget Rodriguez helped me to shape the structure of the meetings. Each month, guest speakers are invited to City Hall for interactive discussions, with the goal of exposing girls to positive, successful female role models. In December, "Boys To Men," a complementary program for boys, was launched. Over 20 8th grade boys gathered at Philip Brooks House in Harvard Yard, and they heard from Harvard undergraduates men about choices they made in their lives to get them where they are today. The boys were also entertained by the men performing a step routine. The response to the program was quite enthusiastic.

**OCTOBER: The GLBT Town Meeting in City Hall** - In 2004, I drafted a City Ordinance calling for a Town Meeting for the GLBT community, to hear directly from participants (there were over 200) about their experiences in Cambridge. That same year, I created another ordinance that would see the formation of the GLBT Commission. The GLBT Commission has since taken up the priorities detailed at the 2004 Town Meeting, and this past October, the GLBT Commission and I brought the GLBT Community back together for a very well attended and successful Town Meeting in City Hall. Once again, we had a mix of community members and city officials present, to speak about the community's ideas and concerns, and to get a status report on how the City is doing in regards to GLBT issues. This has provided us with valuable feedback, and it once again reminds us that Cambridge is proud to be an inclusive city where ALL of its citizens are embraced.

**November: Free Thanksgiving Meals at Tavern in the Square** - Volunteering is a vehicle of civic engagement. On Thanksgiving Day, I joined a group of volunteers to serve Thanksgiving Meals to the needy in the Tavern on the Square Restaurant in Central SQ. We served Thanksgiving meals to 475 people, a 50% increase from last year, according to the restaurant's Managing Partner, Mark Morris, who organized the event and reached out to my office for support. We are each others keeper in the city of Cambridge.

**November: Gov. Patrick and I Flip Switch in Washington Elms** - In November, Gov. Patrick and I flipped a switch to turn on solar panels installed at the Washington Elms development in Cambridge. The panels were installed under the auspices of a new Energy Advantage Program created by Boston Community Capital in partnership with the Mass Renewable Energy Trust, State Street Bank and Borrego Solar. The solar panels will create 92 kilowatts, enough to cover 30% of the developments needs per year and will ease financial burden of heating costs for 140 Cambridge families. Walden Square Apartments will also receive solar panels as part of the same plan effort.

**NOVEMBER: Blue Ribbon Committee on Municipal Energy Launched** - I first

raised the issue of Cambridge becoming a municipal energy provider in 2002, and I am still at it! In November, I created a Blue Ribbon committee to help me explore the ways in which to bring this idea to fruition. The committee's first meeting, on November 4, featured a presentation from the manager of Wellesley's municipal energy plant. The group also heard from an executive with the North East Public Power Association, a lobbying group of municipal energy providers in the northeast. In a global energy climate characterized by uncertainties in supplies and radical fluctuations in costs, we should not be dependent for our energy needs on private utilities, which tend to charge more per kilowatt than their community-owned competition and are less responsive to the needs of their customers.

**NOVEMBER: Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund** - Many good things happened in Cambridge during the course of the year, but our city also experienced some tragedies. A major fire destroyed several buildings on Prince Street, leaving several Cambridge families homeless. A month later, another fire on Lexington Street caused significant damage to property. In both instances, our first responders performed valiantly to rescue victims and provide relief. Residents of Cambridge have also reached out in large by donating to the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund. Our city's residents, by their concern and generosity, were bright stars lighting the way for others during their hour of need especially during the holiday season.

**November: Meeting with Zimbabwean MP** - Zimbabwe, the former British colony known as Rhodesia, has been in the news recently. On November 26, I met with Elias Mudzuri, former Mayor of Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, member of parliament, and Organizing Secretary for the Movement for Democratic Change, the political party now in control of Zimbabwe's parliament, to get an update on the situation in Zimbabwe. During the meeting, which occurred a day after the government of Zimbabwe refused to grant entry visas to President Jimmy Carter and former UN Secretary General Koffi Annan, we talked about the worsening economic conditions, an escalating cholera epidemic, and the status of the power-sharing agreement concluded between the MDC and Mr. Mugabe's party Zanu-PF. Mr. Mudzuri expressed interest in Harare becoming a sister city of Cambridge, and invited me to witness the situation on the ground for myself.

**December: Homophobia in Haitian Community** - Although our city has a reputation as a bastion of tolerance, pockets of homophobia still exist. On December 17, I hosted a panel discussion on homophobia in the Haitian community in the Sullivan Chamber. Moving testimonials by some members of the audience as well as wide-ranging conversation by the panelists, helped to shed light not only on homophobia in the Haitian community, but on homophobia in general. I plan to host more of these forums in 2009.

**ONGOING: Meeting With Local Clergy** - I continued to work with our local members of the clergy, who are important partners in reaching out to all the constituents in Cambridge. Local churches are in the front lines of social issues, such as homelessness. Since becoming Mayor, I have held monthly breakfasts with local clergy to forge a working partnership with this important constituency. Our last meeting occurred on December 9, and revolved around the theme of education. A rich mixture of local churches was represented at the gathering. Next clergy breakfast will happen on January 27, 2009.

**Ongoing: Search for new superintendent of schools.** - Progress continues to be made in the search for the next Superintendent of the Cambridge Public Schools. I have been co-chairing, along with fellow School Committee Member Luc Schuster, the Search Committee, and we have also been working Ray and Associates, a search firm out of Cedar Rapids Iowa. To date, a job description was developed and approved by the school committee; advertisements are running in national and local educational media. Ray and Associates have held informational sessions with the school committee, community groups, teachers, central office administrators and an on-line survey was created to get input from the community about the qualities they desire in the new superintendent. Resume screening is scheduled to begin in January. The school committee will review resumes and conduct interviews throughout February and March. We hope to name a new superintendent by April 2009.

**TO SEND YOUR THOUGHTS TO THE MAYOR. DETACH THE CARD BELOW THE DOTTED LINE, PLACE IT IN AN ENVELOP, AND MAIL TO MAYOR'S OFFICE.**

Message:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/email: \_\_\_\_\_