

## CNA Meeting

**April 26, 2019, LBJ Common Room**

Refreshment and conversation with Diane Beck of the Cambridge Brickwalk Conservancy and Virginia Coleman, a proponent of a Cambridge leaf blower ban.

Welcome – Cathie Zusy

Treasurer report – Julia Halprin – fundraising for St. Augustine going well

St. Augustine update – Gabe Cira – New grant obtained and two more in the works, benefit party on Saturday evening, June 22. Walking tour Sunday, May 5

Walter – described alternative proposal to AHO by Charles Jessup Franklin

Cathie –DCR Begins Planning for Memorial Drive Greenway Improvements—Phase III  
On April 11, DCR held a Listening Session for parkland improvements from the BU Boathouse (east of the rotary) to the Eliot Bridge. Give your feedback by May 9 at

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/memorial-drive-greenway-improvements-phase-iii>.

There is information there, too.

### TOPICS & PRESENTERS

**Discussion of Central Sq. BID (Business Improvement District): What does the BID mean for us?**

**Michael Monestime, Ex. Dir., Central Sq. Business Association**

BID concept: Property owners pay a supplemental fee, collected by the City of Cambridge - that goes to BID to fund supplemental services, formula for payment based on assessed value (\$6M over next 5 years (1.2M per year)). There will be a board consisting of various stakeholders (property owners, merchants, non-profits, cultural institutions, etc). Examples of services envisioned: litter/trash cleaning, street sweeping, sidewalk cleaning, seasonal snow removal, lighting on trees, seasonal flowers. Promotion and marketing: newsletter, dialog among stakeholders about what is needed (e.g., a good grocery store), advocating bringing Riverfest to Central Square. Partnerships with social service agencies. 12 ambassadors full time in Central Square, will do beautification, cleanup, connect people in need with services, report problems. Promote safe and family-friendly Central Square. Partner with community curators to create programs. New website in the works (Centralsq.org) with info about resources, businesses and events. Assisting businesses with licensing & navigating.

History: In early 2018 policy order was passed to do a feasibility study on establishing BID. Then they talked to other communities with BIDs to identify best practices. It required 60% of the property owners representing 51% of the assessed value to get petition. 72% of the businesses signed on. There will be a hearing and vote on June 10 to formally establish the

BID. If you agree w/this program, CSBA requests that you come voice your support on 6/10 at City Council meeting.

*Comments and questions:*

Medical Marijuana Dispensaries. There was concern expressed about opening of marijuana dispensaries, and it was noted that the rules actually require Cambridge to have eight of them. Four applicants have applied for permits at Central Square. Monestime pointed out that this is beyond the scope of what the BID could address. He also noted that the dispensaries will have blocked windows—not too friendly or vibrant—and that they are required to be 1,800 feet from one another UNLESS they have a social equity license. Then the buffer doesn't apply. Many of the applicants are saying that they are social equity businesses to get around this. If four pot shops opening up at Central Square concerns you, write City Manager Louis DePasquale ASAP at [citymanager@cambridgema.gov](mailto:citymanager@cambridgema.gov). He is the only one who can stop this.

There were also questions about smoking and alcohol in Central Square.

Miscellaneous comments:

Don't create too much light, overdo decorations.

Don't give city a "bye" on what tax dollars should pay for. Monestime answer: The city is the largest paying property owner in the BID program.

**Central Square Library: How can it be a more welcoming place?**

**Jason Yee, Manager of Branch Services and Joy Kim, Deputy Director of the CPL**

What the library does: 185,000 visitors last year, 100,000 items borrowed. Children's services (computers, programs, print collection, story time, crafts, toddler sing), ESOL program – just show up, resume writing assistance and assistance with online application process, computers and chrome books, study spaces. There will also be a program of free meals for under 18. STEAM kits to be circulated. It was emphasized that the library serves all, even people with difficult issues, as long as they comply with behavior standards.

Recent steps: Drop in times with multidisciplinary outreach team to help connect homeless etc. with services, regular walkthroughs by CPD homeless outreach officers, working with DPW to maintain clean sidewalk and façade.

*Comments and questions:*

The discussion about the library revealed a tension between the desire for the library to be a welcoming resource for the whole community and the desire to make sure that people struggling with issues such as homelessness and alcohol abuse do not create unclean or unpleasant conditions. Some said they don't go to the library because they have to walk by feces, liquor bottles, etc.; they pointed out that this is a library, not a shelter. Others stressed the mission of the library to be inclusive.

One example of the unpleasant conditions at the Pearl St entrance is the puddle to right of stairway. It was noted that the DPW hoses every week, but maybe drain or raising is needed.

Because of the particular neighborhood where the branch is located, librarians regularly have to respond to stressful situations or 911 calls. Some raised concerns about staff burnout.

Again, the topic of marijuana came up. There was concern about a marijuana dispensary in close proximity to the library branch that is being visited by children. The library had the right to object but chose not to re the location of the dispensary in the old “Blockbusters.”

The City’s five year capital plan does not include Central Square Library. Monestime noted that the library will be in the BID and will benefit from the cleanup and outreach efforts of its ambassadors.

There was a consensus in the group that the City needs to do something to improve the Pearl St. entrance. It is dirty, smelly and unwelcoming.

Miscellaneous comments:

There is no parking at the library, making it difficult for some to use it.

Don’t throw away old books. Guests point out that there is limited space, but that the old books are not trashed, but donated to More Than Words.

### **Cambridgeport Committees: Let’s plan for our future!**

The group divided up into small groups according to what committee they wanted to join or help.

#### Mobility

Researches transportation/traffic concerns in Cambridgeport, interfacing with Police (reviewing accident reports), the City’s Traffic and Parking, CDD’s Environmental & Transportation Planning division, and the MBTA. Presents research and proposed actions to improve situations and resolve problems. Presents at future CNA meeting focused on these issues that the committee organizes. Prepares 1-page summary to distribute.

#### Parks & Gardens

Interfaces with CDD re updates for parks and major landowners (MIT and City) re concerns: adding trees, improving Alberico Park, and creating cutting flower and community gardens on empty lots, among other things. Presents research and proposed actions to create new green spaces at future CNA meeting organized around this theme, organized by the committee. Prepares 1-page summary to distribute.

#### Local Business

Connects with local businesses, landowners and CDD and explores business needs and community business deficits. How do we bring desired businesses—a grocery, café and local bar (as per our survey) to Cambridgeport? Presents research and proposed actions at future CNA

meeting organized around this theme organized by the committee. Prepares 1-page summary to distribute.

### Development & Zoning

Reviews construction permits and connects with major landowners (MIT, Kimco, BioMed Realty & Alexandra Realty) and CDD to learn their plans for development in Cambridgeport. Reviews zoning ordinances. Presents research and proposals at future CNA meeting organized by the committee around this theme. Prepares 1-page summary to distribute.

### Housing

Researches and provides information regarding zoning ordinances relating to housing and how proposed developments might affect the neighborhood. Looks at how other similar cities and neighborhoods assess options to preserve and expand stock of affordable rental and homeownership housing. Explores ways to engage all parties in discussions regarding maintaining housing stability and the character of a diverse community. Presents research and proposals at future CNA meeting organized by the committee around this theme. Prepares 1-page summary to distribute.

Brian Aull, Clerk  
7 May 2019