<p style="text-align:center">**A CAMBRIDGE VOTER'S GUIDE:**
Municipal Election</p>

This guide is designed to give the Cambridge voter basic information on Plan E, Proportional Representation (PR), Voter Registration, Absentee Voting, Polling Places, and a list of candidates for the City Council and School Committee.

If you have a question concerning the coming election, please call the Reference Room of the Cambridge Public Library, 349-4044, 9:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M., Monday - Friday, 9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. Saturdays; or the office of the Election Commission, 349-4361, 8:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M., Monday - Friday.

ADOPTION OF PLAN E

On June 1, 1938, Massachusetts Governor Charles F. Hurley signed a bill adding a fifth city charter form (Plan E) to the four plans already available. Modeled after a charter successful in Cincinnati, Plan E provided for a city manager form of government with proportional representation elections.

As soon as the bill became law, a group of citizens formed the Cambridge Committee for Plan E and obtained the necessary signatures on a petition to put the question of adopting Plan E on the Cambridge ballot in November 1938.

In the ensuing campaign, Plan E advocates said it would mean that a trained administrator and not a politician would run the city. Of PR voting, they said it would guarantee majority rule and at the same time give minority groups representation in proportion to their actual strength.

Opponents centered much of their fire on the PR voting system, which they said would excite group prejudices and make voting a lottery. They also said the plan would be too expensive and would give too much power to the City Council.

Emotions ran high and, on that election day in 1938, Plan E was defeated by 1,767 votes. Two years later, it was adopted by 7,552 votes, with a winning margin in eight of the city's eleven wards. The first PR election was held in 1941 with the first Plan E government taking office in January 1942. Since then, there have been five referenda-in 1952, 1953, 1957, 1961, and 1965-on whether to repeal or retain the PR voting system. Each time the vote has been to retain it.

PLAN E

Plan E is a City Manager form of government with nine Councillors and six School Committee members elected at large by Proportional Representation (PR) for a two year term. After members of the Council take the oath of office in January, they elect one of the nine to serve as Mayor.

The Mayor is the official head of the city for ceremonial purposes, the presiding officer of the Council when it is in session, and the chairperson of the School Committee.

The City Council is the lawmaking body, appointing a City Manager, City Clerk, and City Auditor.

The City Manager is the chief administrative officer of the city carrying out policies of the City Council for an indefinite term.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Proportional Representation (PR) is the method by which voters under Plan E elect members of the City Council and School Comittee. PR attempts to ensure minority representation in government while respecting the principle of majority control. Any group of voters that numbers more than one-tenth of the total population can be sure of electing at least one member of a nine-member Council, but a majority group of voters can be sure of electing a majority of the Council.

Proportional Representation requires that the candidates' names be rotated in alphabetical order on the ballot so that each candidate appears in the desirable top-of-the-ballot position on an equal number of ballots.

DIRECTIONS TO THE VOTER

In a PR election you may vote for as many of the candidates listed on the ballot as you wish. You must, however, indicate the order of your preference among the various candidates for whom you vote.

With the new style ballots designed for the computerized ballot counting, you vote by shading in one of the numbered ovals next to the candidate names. The number in the oval you choose to shade in indicates your order of preference among the candidates listed on the ballot.

Fill in the number 1 oval next to your first choice; fill in the number 2 oval next to your second choice; fill in the number 3 oval next to your third choice, and so on. You may fill in as many choices as you please, but each number may be used only once.

Fill in no more than one oval per candidate and fill in no more than one oval per perference column. This would invalidate your ballot.

To vote for a write in candidate you must write the name of the candidate in one of the areas marked "write-in" and then fill in a numbered oval next to the name you have written.

HOW THE PR "QUOTA" SYSTEM WORKS

Proportional representation or PR is the form of voting used by Cambridge under the Plan E form of government. Under PR a candidate needs to win a certain proportion of the votes to be elected. This winning fraction of the votes is referred to as the "quota."

The quota is determined by dividing the total number of valid ballots cast by the number of positions to be elected plus one and then adding one to the resulting dividend.

Thus, to elect 9 City Councillors, the total number of valid ballots cast is divided by 10; to elect 6 School Committee members, the total is divided by seven. And in both cases 1 is added to the result of the division.

For example, if 25,000 valid ballots are cast for City Councillors, the quota will be 2,501 (25,000 divided by ten, plus 1).

HOW THE BALLOTS ARE COUNTED

The count begins with the sorting of ballots by the first preference shown-the NUMBER 1 vote. This is generally known as the "First Count."

Any candidates who reach the necessary quota with Number 1 votes are declared elected. Any extra ballots they receive beyond the quota are redistributed to the candidates marked next in preference (the number 2 preference) on those excess ballots.

The count continues with the elimination of those candidates receiving fewer than fifty votes in the first count. Their ballots are redistributed to the other candidates according to the next preference marked.

After each distribution, the candidate now having the lowest number of votes is eliminated and his/her ballots redistributed to the next indicated preference (number 2, 3, 4, etc.).

As candidates reach the quota through the addition of redistributed ballots to their totals, they are declared elected and no further ballots are transferred to them.

This process continues until all candidates have been eliminated except the nine winners.

For many years the counting of the ballots was a lengthy process requiring several days to complete. This was a "hand count" open to public viewing while ballots were reshuffled during the various rounds of counting. The new computerized system of ballot counting introduced in the election of 1997 has made possible a much faster count.

COMPUTERIZED PR BALLOT TABULATION

The first step

On election night at the central tabulation center, the memory card from each precinct's ballot box is entered into a computer. The memory card is a storing device containing a picture of each ballot recorded by a scanner in the ballot box. This computer takes the records of each ballot from the memory card and sorts them by precinct into separate files, one each for City Council, School Committee, and ballot question. The complete ballot files for each race or question are then copied onto a computer disk. Each ballot record consists of the candidates selected by the voter and the order in which they were ranked.

The second step

The computer disk with the ballot files is installed in a second computer. This computer contains the software which counts the ballots. The software has been programmed to follow the "Cambridge Rules," as documented in M.G.L. Chapter 54A and in the Cincinnati Code - Article IX of 1938. By computer, the same process formerly carried out manually by more than a hundred counters over the course of a week is conducted in a matter of seconds by the electronic sorting, counting, and transfer of votes.

ELECTION RESULTS

An "unofficial first count" of number one (#1) votes for each candidate for City Council and School Committee will be available on election night within minutes of receipt of the memory card from the last reporting precinct. This count is referred to as "unofficial" because it does not contain all ballots. For example, it does not yet include write-ins or ballots marked in a way that could not be read by the scanner at the precinct level. Those votes must be individually added to those already scanned. Only when this last step is completed on the day after the election will all valid ballots have been recorded.

The complete ballot records are then copied and read into the tabulation software where they are tallied The software produces an "official first count" and then proceeds to distribute surplus and eliminate candidates with the fewest votes until all seats have been filled. The Election Commissioners declare the results.