



Mayor Henrietta Davis.....

# news-in-a-letter

WINTER 2013

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Dear Friends,

*I want to wish you a happy and healthy New Year! This has been a special year for me, being the mayor of the great city of Cambridge. I remain grateful to my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to serve the city in this way and to the voters for putting me on the Council.*

## CITY MANAGER CONTRACT: EMPHASIS ON STABILITY AND CONTINUITY

The City Council has major news to report: we have voted to offer Richard Rossi, a 30-year veteran of the city administration, a 3-year contract to serve as City Manager beginning July 1, 2013 when Robert Healy, 30-year City Manager, retires.

I support Richard Rossi's appointment as City Manager for three major reasons:

1. The city's survey of the public shows we have a 94% approval rating for the quality of life in Cambridge. The team that brought us that high rating needs to stay intact and motivated. I'm fairly certain that if the employees had a vote in this contract, Rich Rossi would be their first choice.
2. We have outstanding fiscal ratings, the triple A bond rating, money in the bank and in particular, a healthy commercial revenue stream. The fiscal team that brought us to this point also needs to stay in place to continue this success.
3. Most important, we face some tough decisions about what growth we as a city will allow. This is true for commercial development, but also for housing, where studies show that the Greater Boston area, including Cambridge, requires 12 thousand new housing units per year for the next decade in order to retain young workers and to keep housing prices even modestly affordable. Rich Rossi has directed many of our public processes (such as the library planning) and is committed to including all interested parties in the process of continuing a positive direction for the city. The City Council is discussing a citywide goal setting and visioning process to set our direction and Rich Rossi is the man to direct that.

I am particularly pleased that the transition from one City Manager to the next will be smooth. With much gratitude to Bob Healy for the team that he has assembled at City Hall, I look forward to Rich Rossi's tenure as City Manager.

## CHAIRING THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

**Visiting the Schools** ► As Mayor, I am busier than ever. In addition to chairing the City Council on Monday nights, most Tuesdays I also have the honor of chairing the School Committee, where I once served for eight years. This means not only more night meetings (!), but also the responsibility to be knowledgeable about a whole new set of issues. The best part of this task is getting to know the city's children and their families. I love visiting the schools and hearing from the students. I've visited each school at least once. Best of all I've gotten a chance to meet students at every grade level and hear what they are thinking. We have wonderful young people growing up here. If I can be permitted to make some generalizations: from what I see we have exceptionally bright young people, as diverse as you can imagine, and they are eager to learn. And yes, they are definitely above average. Meeting our students energizes me and reminds me of the responsibility the adults around them have to inspire, educate, and guide them.

**Innovation Agenda: The New Upper Schools** ► The focus of most of my school visits has been the new upper schools. This fall, after many years-- perhaps the entire history of the school system--our grade structure was reorganized and a new system was put in place. Now, except for the two-way Spanish immersion program "Amigos on Upton Street," students go as far as fifth grade in one of 11 "lower schools" and from there attend one of four upper schools, spread across the city. Why the change? Simply, not all the elementary schools had rich-enough programs for 6th, 7th and 8th graders because class size was in some cases too low, having a negative affect on the quality of some of our middle school education. The new Innovation Agenda brings focused learning on the basics and better opportunities to add enrichment for all students.

**Controlled Choice** ► The bedrock of our integrated school system is "controlled choice." What this means is that parents can choose a school for their children, but within limits. This year, under the direction of the Controlled Choice Subcommittee of the School Committee, chaired by Alice Turkel and Fred Fantini, the rules for choosing a school will be reviewed to assure that they remain fair and also produce the kind of diversity that we desire in each school. This is an enormous undertaking, that in the end will be fairer and more predictable for parents.

**STEM Champions** ► I'm supporting School Superintendent Jeff Young by involving university and business partners in order to increase the number of our students choosing STEM careers. This acronym stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. This is a particular concern of mine and the basis of my first-ever campaign speech. The speech went like this: "With MIT at one end of the city and Harvard at the other, our children should have the best education in the country." This is especially true of STEM education. Enlisting our universities and STEM businesses into inspiring and enriching our students is essential and should make a difference. Not enough Cambridge students look at the abundance of jobs in Kendall Square and believe "I will work there someday." That's got to change.

**Kids' Council** ► As Mayor, I also chair the Kids' Council, officially entitled the Cambridge Coordinating Council for Children and Families. This group is a combination of city residents, elected officials, city staff, and non-profit representatives. We meet six or seven times a year to promote programs and recommend policies that improve the lives of our children and families. This year the Kids' Council's focus is on improving the City's Community Engagement Team, which devises ways to reach out and involve residents who face of hurdles as they encounter city government. The Kids' Council also recognizes that low-income and immigrant parents often have a more difficult time supporting their children's education. The Community Engagement Team, we feel, could help address that need.

**Trauma and ACES** ➤ For 20 years, I've co chaired the Healthy Children Task Force with Dr. David Link of the Cambridge Health Alliance. This year the HCTF is devoting itself to learning about adverse childhood experiences (ACES) with the hope that we will strengthen the safety net for children who have suffered the ill-effects of trauma. New research on brain science has shown both that trauma not only can have long-term effects on learning and quality of life, but also that some of these adverse effects can be mitigated by what is called trauma-sensitive classrooms and by a well-informed safety net made up of community professionals.

## HOUSING

**The Silver Ribbon Commission** ➤ A year ago the Silver Ribbon Commission finished its deliberations on housing options for aging Cambridge residents and the report on its findings has just been released. While it took some time for the report to be completed, it is even more relevant today than it was one year ago. A major report, "The Greater Boston Housing Report Card," released in November, calls for 12 thousand new units of housing in the Greater Boston area every year for the next ten years. The Report Card offers information about what some of that housing should be, especially right here in Cambridge. Our chief findings for the Silver Ribbon report indicate that Cambridge has large numbers of single women, now living alone. Many of those who spoke with the Commission wanted housing options, such as co-housing, that would allow them to age in close proximity to others. Some spoke for mixed generational housing in particular. The city will conduct a survey as follow-up to our Cambridge report to learn opinions from the broader community. You may find this report on line at [cambridgema.gov/mayor](http://cambridgema.gov/mayor) or ask for a copy by calling Matt Nelson at my office at 617-349-4321.

## ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

**A Community Compact for Sustainability** ➤ Cambridge has been working with Harvard and MIT for at least two decades to advance the sustainability of this community. In recent months I have been meeting with representatives of these two institutions to formalize and expand that partnership. For Earth Day in April, together we intend to issue a declaration of forming a Cambridge Compact for Sustainability. This compact will acknowledge our past successes, help pave the way for Cambridge to become a "Living, Learning, Laboratory" for students and faculty, and will begin the process of reaching out to other city partners focusing on these areas.

**Tap Water in Schools** ➤ I have been involved in promoting drinking tap water, instead of soda or bottled water. Tap water is an almost free alternative to drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, unhealthy for everyone, but particularly unhealthy for children. This year I'm helping to promote tap water in schools, since water now is required by the federal government to be offered as a beverage for lunch. While our water is tested annually by the Cambridge Water Department, too many people don't seem to know this. First, we need to inform students and adults in our schools about how good our Cambridge water is. Second, we need to make sure all school fountains are working and are cleaned and maintained. I would also like to reduce the use of disposable plastic water bottles because they create mountains of trash around the world.

**Solar Roofs** ➤ Professor Christophe Reinhardt of MIT has mapped the city and its buildings to see what their solar potential is. You can now go on line to see if you should put solar on your rooftop, how much it would cost and how long it would take to repay your cost by generating your own electricity. Go to the Mayor's website or [www.cambridgema.gov/solar/](http://www.cambridgema.gov/solar/) to try out this new resource and if you have any questions you may call Meghan Shaw at 617-349-5323. HEET, the non-profit energy efficiency team, is using a similar tool to promote more solar installations. Email them at [heet.cambridge@gmail.com](mailto:heet.cambridge@gmail.com).

**Aiming for a Net Zero Energy School!** ➤ For ten years—ahead of most other U.S. cities-- Cambridge has been constructing its new buildings, such as the library, schools and administrative buildings to be "green buildings" that are "LEED certified," a designation of the U.S. Green Building Council. I believe now is the time to take this effort a step further. While LEED looks at many measures of sustainability, it does not go far enough when it comes to energy. With the approval of the City Council, we are going even further and attempting to build the new Martin Luther King, Jr. School as a Net Zero Energy school. That means that it will use 50 to 70% less energy than an average school building of its size and type. We will attempt to generate the remaining needed power, probably using solar energy. Lessons already learned in this process have given the city administration valuable insights about how to use less energy in existing buildings.

## BALANCING DEVELOPMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION

**Central Square** ➤ The Central Square Advisory Committee has completed its six-month- long study for the square's future. Key findings of the study include adding more housing to the square to enhance its vitality, especially if middle-income housing is added. Housing for seniors, as suggested by the Silver Ribbon Commission, would be a good match for Central Square. The Advisory Committee also emphasized making better use of city parking lots. While parking is important and should be maintained, possibly within structures, the open space owned by the city is an opportunity to add amenities or housing that will meet the vision of a lively urban center. At the end of last year, the city received the good news that the Massachusetts Cultural Commission designated Central Square as a cultural center, which will help to add attention to cultural assets there.

**Forest City Zoning Proposal** ➤ Now that the Central Square Study is completed, the Forest City development company has resubmitted a zoning proposal for that area, a proposal that had been deferred until the study was completed. Forest City wishes to build a large biotech structure where the All Asia Bar and the Salvation Army store now stand and needs new zoning to do so. The building, if zoning is approved, will house an expansion of Millennium Pharmaceuticals operation. The company specializes in developing drugs to treat cancer. This proposal is consistent with the goals described in the Central Square Study and supports a significant local company.

**Kendall Square** ➤ Last year MIT, which owns land it can use for either academic or commercial space, asked the City Council for permission to make changes in the Kendall Square area to allow them to add more commercial development. After a yearlong study of Kendall by a city advisory committee, goals have been set by a group that represents all interests. A new zoning proposal has been submitted by MIT which supports the conclusions of the study. In its new proposal, MIT emphasizes developing Kendall Square as an "innovation gateway" to Cambridge, opening a new entrance to its campus, and adding more housing. MIT's proposal will be considered in the New Year.

**Nonprofits and Community Benefits** ➤ In recent years, it has become common for cities to expect payments from commercial developers who want to increase their development potential by adding more height or a larger building. It's the goal of the City Council Government Operations Committee not only to create a consistent formula for collecting such payments, called community benefits, but also to determine how to allocate the collected funds to distribute them in some way to needy nonprofits.

For allocating the funds, we expect to determine a method, similar to the Community Preservation Act grants or the Affordable Housing Trust grant program. This is not an easy task, because of the many needs faced by non-profits, especially in tough economic times. Competition will be intense. I favor helping non-profit agencies by giving grants for non-recurring expenditures.

**Foundry Building** ► In exchange for being able to build more in buildings in the Binney Street area, Alexandria Real Estate gave a building to the city, a former metal foundry at 117 Rogers St. in East Cambridge. How to use the foundry is the question before the Government Operations Committee. Two options are being vigorously endorsed by their supporters. One is to keep the foundry building for more incubator space for start-ups, with the city as landlord. The other major option is to sell the foundry and use the money to build an endowment available for non-profits.

### **KINDNESS, COMPASSION AND GENEROSITY IN CAMBRIDGE**

**Martin Luther King Day** ► This year Martin Luther King Day will be an inspiring day in Cambridge. Not only is it Dr. King's birthday, it will be inauguration day in Washington, D.C. For the many of us who are not going to Washington, there will be a special day centered at City Hall. First, an hour before the inauguration (time not yet set) we will host a very large screen TV in the council chambers so that all may see the festivities. Second, the City's Peace Commission will host a service at St. Peter's church (across the street from City Hall), starting at noon, commemorating Dr. King and his life. Third, the Many Helping Hands community group will host volunteer craft activities from 2 to 5 in City Hall and other nearby buildings, where all are invited to participate in making practical gifts for homeless families and needy elders. Join us!

**The Dalai Lama Came to Cambridge** ► Last autumn, for several weeks our city was honored to be the temporary home of the Dalai Lama as he visited local communities and spoke at many events nearby. I was personally honored to be invited to meet this very special man and ask him about the role cities play in extending kindness, compassion, and peace. In particular, I asked him about a program he supports called Compassionate Cities, happening in Seattle and Louisville, where they go all out to promote volunteerism. I'm exploring this initiative for our city.

**Scholarships** ► We are very fortunate that with generous contributions from the public, city government is able to give about 40 scholarships each year for about \$2500 to Cambridge students pursuing higher education. As mayor I would like to see us do even better. Not because we are not already generous, but because the need is so great. Students often falter when they get to college, because they can afford the first year, but not later years when scholarships are less available. To contribute, make a check out to the City of Cambridge Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 2005, Cambridge, MA 02139.

Sincerely yours,



Mayor Henrietta Davis