



Mayor E. Denise Simmons

Spring 2016 Community Newsletter



Dear Friends:

Spring is finally here! I am honored to be starting my second term as Mayor, and with my second term in this position, I have revived a number of my old initiatives. First and foremost, I have revived my “walk-in” office hours on Fridays from 9 am—12 pm. Anyone is free to come visit my office for 5-10 minutes, without an appointment, on a first come, first serve basis. I strongly suggest that you call my office earlier in the week to ensure I’ll be available that Friday, and I do hope you’ll stop by, even just to say hello. As always, I want to keep you in-the-know as to what’s happening in your community, and to remind you that I am always an email, phone call, or office visit away. I can always be reached at (617) 349-4321, I can be reached by email at dsimmons@cambridgema.gov, and at www.DeniseSimmons.com (where you can also sign up for Facebook & Twitter updates)!

Community News:

Affordable Housing: In the 20-plus years since rent control ended in Cambridge, rental prices have steadily increased, too many longtime Cambridge residents have been priced out of their homes, and a housing crisis has been worsening. As Chair of the Housing Committee, I held numerous meetings with the major housing agencies and stakeholders to determine how to best create new affordable units, and how to preserve our existing affordable units. I successfully pressed the City to adopt a revised ordinance that will require developers to create a higher percentage of affordable units in their buildings and will bring in millions in additional revenue for this purpose. I also urged the City, the Cambridge Housing Authority, and major players like HRI and Just A Start to find ways we can all work together to try to mitigate the worst effects of this housing crisis. I also successfully pushed the Normandy-Twining representatives to provide up to 60 new affordable units as part of their forthcoming development in Central Square. This is a hugely important piece of my work to push for policies and developments that will allow as many longtime Cambridge residents as possible to stay in their homes, and to be able to afford to live here.

Mayoral Advisory Committees: When I served my first term as Mayor in 2008-2009, I sought to call upon my friends and colleagues throughout the community to keep me updated on items of interest and concern, so that I could ensure the City Council was paying adequate attention to these items. In order for the City to take action on certain items, we sometimes do rely upon people bringing these items to our attention. This is why I am happy to have reconvened my monthly **Mayoral Senior Advisory Committee**, an informal gathering of handpicked, respected senior voices that are my eyes and ears on the ground throughout our city. Each month, these 15 seniors sit down and update me on everything from transportation concerns, to ideas on how to improve sidewalk safety and snow removal, to the goings-on in our senior buildings. Not everything will rise to the level of a policy order, but every item is assessed as we collectively look to resolve senior concerns. Similarly, I have re-established my past practice of holding monthly meetings with local clergy. These **Clergy Breakfasts** are an opportunity for me to hear about the regular social services provided by the various congregations throughout our community, and every religion and denomination has been invited to participate. These meetings also are meant to foster greater awareness of and collaboration between the local houses of worship and the City, as so much of our work catering to the less-fortunate among us overlaps and complements each other. I am hoping that by the time I leave the Mayor’s Office in January 2018, the relationships between the local clergy shall be strong and durable, and the people of Cambridge shall be better-served as a result of this renewed, reinvigorated collaboration.

Standing By Our Workers:

As Mayor, I shall continue to convene regular meetings with members of the local Building Trades, to explore ways for Cambridge and Boston to work more collaboratively in our job training programs and labor apprenticeship programs. I have led the fight to ensure that developers in Cambridge use skilled, qualified laborers on local developments just as they do in Boston — something that has not always been the case. I have continued to help strengthen the ties between the labor trades and our public schools, so that students nearing graduation are made aware of apprenticeship programs and viable employment paths. I am currently working to ensure that all City of Cambridge workers are treated fairly and to uniform standards and are paid prevailing wages. Behind the scenes, I continue to regularly press private developers to use skilled labor from the local trades on jobs in order to ensure quality work and safe working conditions for the workers, and to protect Cambridge jobs. Much of this work never reaches the headlines, but it is important and ongoing, and I will continue to stand in lockstep with the working men and women of Cambridge.

Girls Leadership Group: I am proud to be co-sponsoring, along with the YWCA Cambridge, the third iteration of the Girls Only Leadership Development Program, aka the GOLD Program. This group provides 8th grade girls from across Cambridge with the life and leadership skills they will need to help place them on a path toward future success. The GOLD program (free for all members) continues to meet monthly through June 2016, allowing its members to meet and learn from a diverse cast of strong, local female business, political, and civic leaders, in settings such as Cambridge City Hall, the YWCA, and the home of Ambassador Swanee Hunt. Each meeting focuses upon lessons ranging from high school and college preparation, to lectures on how to prepare for different career paths, to learning proper social etiquette, to the benefits of civic engagement and networking. We are actively looking to recruit girls who will be entering the 8th grade this Fall for the next session. More information and online applications can be found online at <http://dsimmons8.wix.com/GOLD>.

Constituent Services & Affordable Housing: As the Chair of the Housing Committee last term, I focused on looking at affordable housing: how do we increase our affordable housing stock, who is eligible, and what is the quality of the units? Searching for affordable housing can be a daunting, overwhelming experience. For those who are thinking of applying for housing, **I urge you to contact my office first and pick up my Affordable Housing Search Guide** (which is also available on my website). This is designed to help you go to the housing agencies armed with a list of the most appropriate questions to ask them, and to better understand your rights and responsibilities as an applicant. For those who already have housing applications in and have questions, you can call me for assistance, or you can contact the Cambridge Multi Service Center at 617-349-6340. The Multi Service Center has housing advocates and case managers that can answer your questions and help guide you through the system. I will stress the importance of always keeping copies of any documents the agencies give you, or any documents you give to them. *Keep a journal of every housing appointment and conversation you have*, with the time, date, and name of the person you spoke with. Creating a detailed paper-trail of your housing search can be incredibly important in making certain that your housing application does not fall through the cracks.

For Job Seekers: I strongly encourage those who are seeking employment to visit the City's *Office of Workforce Development* at 51 Inman Street. There are individual case managers at the Cambridge Employment Program (617-349-6166), who will assist you in your job search; there is also the Cambridge Works program (617-349-6234), a 14-week transitional jobs program that pays \$10/hour and can give people valuable job experience and connections within the working world. While no city councilor has the ability to simply pick up the phone and place a constituent in a job, I will always try my best to steer job seekers towards the people and resources that can at least point you in the right direction. In addition, I am in the initial planning stages of hosting a Small Business Town Hall Meeting later this year, which will be held either at City Hall or in the Cambridge Senior Center and will be designed to see how we, as a City, can better foster a healthy economic atmosphere, and how we can better connect those who have job openings with those who are seeking steady employment. Stay tuned to my Twitter and Facebook feeds for updates on this as we move towards the autumn months.

Staffing: Central to the Mayor's ability to exercise her duties as the legislative and ceremonial head of the City of Cambridge and the Chair of the School Committee is the Mayor's staff. Upon election as Mayor, one of the first thing that a Mayor has to do is to hire able and qualified people on her staff. I am happy to announce that the key pieces of my Mayoral team are in place. Neal Alpert, who has served as my City Council Aide for the past four years, is my Chief-of-Staff. Muna Kangsen is my Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Constituent Services. Theresa Stevens is my Executive Assistant. Tony Clarke, who was born and raised in Cambridge and is a member of the BHCC faculty, is my new Advisor on education policy. Jeffrey Walker, who was my chief-of-staff in 2009, is my new Director of Special Projects and Simone Steinberg, who has worked with me closely on the Girls Only Leadership Development Program, is my Mayoral Aide. My staff stands ready to assist you with any concerns or issues you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact them if they can be of help to you.

List of Important City/State Contacts:

City Clerk's Office	617-349-4260	Cambridge Housing Authority	617-864-3020
City Council	617-349-4280	Cambridge Council on Aging	617-349-6220
City Manager	617-349-4300	Police Review Board	617-349-4694
Homeless Services	627-349-6340	Dept. of Transitional Assistance	617-551-1700
Mayor's Office	617-349-4321	Cambridge Youth Programs	617-349-6200
Police Department	617-349-3300	Human Rights Commission	617-349-4396
Public Schools	617-349-6400	MA Attorney General	617-727-8400
Public Works	617-349-4800	Cambridge GLBT Commission	617-349-3355
Traffic & Parking	617-349-4700	Cambridge Fire Department	617-349-4990
MBTA Customer SVC	617-222-3200	Cambridge Workforce Development	617-349-6234