

10/19/2022 Statement by Study Committee Member, Ron Creamer

Nearly 3 years ago on December 13th, 2019, we study committee members received notice of our appointment to work on this project. We were tasked with considering the scope, details, appropriateness and feasibility of implementing a Neighborhood Conservation District in East Cambridge.

The “Feasibility” of a potential NCD, by definition, must address the suitability of a potential NCD to the community onto which it is imposed. Many in the community, including this study committee member, felt that the study committee’s deliberations proceeded undeterred and with a deaf ear to community concerns.

When this point was raised, we were repeatedly assured by our moderator and leader, Charlie Sullivan, that we would not recommend any NCD for adoption without a clear consensus from our community to do so. In early 2020, when asked what a consensus would look like, Charlie humorously responded by borrowing a 1964 quote from Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart. Regarding consensus, Charlie said, “it is difficult to define, but I’ll know it when I see it”.

A few months ago, lacking any signs of community appetite or consensus for the proposed NCD after two plus years of deliberations, Charlie proposed a series of walking tours and community outreach program, followed up with a postcard poll, the results of which clearly showed a lack of anything resembling a community consensus..

Contrary to Charlie’s promise, and without any indication of consensus, our committee spent some time trying to pick and choose ways to implement the ECNCD anyway. In another shift, Charlie then contradicted his earlier promises and told us that it wasn’t up to us to decide if there was consensus or not, that it was a political decision best left up to the City Council.

This last minute shift again brings the integrity of this 3 year process into question. I ask my fellow study committee members to look inside and be courageous enough to admit out loud what you already know. The study isn’t about what we want, rather, it is about what would fit our community. There is no consensus, we have no mandate, no charter, and no business foisting this program on an unwilling community.

Thank you

-Ron Creamer, ECNCD Study Committee Member