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**Sent:** Wednesday, January 30, 2019 10:32 AM

**To:** City Council <[CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV](mailto:CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV)>

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**Subject:** Inman Square

Councillors,

I write to you after receiving a number of e-mails regarding concerns with the scheduled tree removals at Vellucci Plaza. This morning's tree removals were necessary for the project to make critical safety improvements in Inman Square to move forward. As you may be aware, the overall 2-year project schedule was outlined in a newsletter that was sent to the community in January (see attached document). All legally required due process has been afforded with respect to the removal of the trees, and there is no legal requirement that the City needed to delay this morning's tree removal.

To date, we have completed exploratory trenches in the plaza, restriped the Springfield Street parking lot to facilitate the relocation of the Blue Bikes Station to the lot, and removed the light poles in the raised granite planters. The next phase of work will be Eversource Gas mobilizing to replace their gas infrastructure through the intersection. Their new gas main will be installed in the future right-of-way to reduce the utilities in the future plazas and reduce conflicts with the plaza improvements. Eversource Gas is scheduled to mobilize their crews in early February and anticipates 3-4 months to complete their work. The Eversource work could not proceed until the trees were removed. This schedule allows the bidding of the City improvements in March, and allows for our contractor to mobilize on site in May.

Concurrently with these early construction activities, we have been working with the East Cambridge Business Association on a mitigation plan and coordinating the various construction activities. If the tree removals had been delayed, Eversource Gas would have been delayed and we would have either had to delay our contract, thereby extending the overall construction period, or have an extended period of time with both Eversource Gas and the City's contractors working in the intersection. Both options would be problematic and would increase the impact on the local businesses.

The community and the City have spent a significant amount of time discussing the impacts the redesign will have on the current Vellucci Plaza. If we could make the critical safety improvements while leaving the existing plaza untouched, we would; however, this is not possible. We have worked with the public throughout the process to develop the design of this important civic space in the heart of Inman Square to ensure that it becomes a great urban space that will be well used and enjoyed by the community. I know that the Inman Square redesign process has been a very difficult one, and it has never been my intent for this project to divide the City. I firmly believe that the City's plan is the best viable option to ensure the Inman Square is safe for all users, regardless of their mode of travel to or through the Square. The primary focus of this project has always been and continues to be about safety.

Best,

Louis DePasquale