



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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September 2, 2020

To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Charles Sullivan, Executive Director
Re: Renewal of the East Cambridge NCD Study

The East Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Study was initiated by the Historical Commission on October 3, 2019. The first meeting of the Study Committee was held in January 2020, and meetings continued until the City Manager shut down all in-person municipal activities on March 17. While appointed boards and commissions with regulatory authority resumed virtual meetings in July, the study committee has neither met nor communicated since the shut-down.

Pursuant to Ch. 2.78, Art. III of the City Code, an NCD study entails temporary CHC jurisdiction over the study area and allows the study committee one year to prepare a recommendation to the historical commission. In the current case, the study committee that was appointed at the end of 2019 was able to meet over less than three months before it was forced to pause. Unless the study period is renewed, the Historical Commission's jurisdiction will cease on October 2, 2020. While the study committee can resume, the urgent conditions of intense development that convinced the Commission to initiate the study are likely to reappear.

Precedent for renewal of an NCD study period was established in 2000, when the Marsh NCD Study Committee was unable to complete its work within twelve months. On June 23, 2000 City Solicitor Russell Higley issued an opinion, which said in part:

When more than one year has passed from the Historical Commission's previous hearing on the designation, there does not appear to be any restriction on a majority of the Historical Commission reinstating and reconsidering a neighborhood conservation district petition. Such reconsideration would have the effect of restarting the protection period referred to in 2.78.180(I) cited above.

Current City Solicitor Nancy Glowka has concurred with this opinion.

I recommend, in view of the circumstances pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing cessation of municipal activities, that the Historical Commission vote to reconsider and reinstitute the petition that was accepted on October 3, 2019 in order to restart the protection period and extend the Commission's jurisdiction in the East Cambridge NCD Study Area until October 2, 2021.

cc: East Cambridge NCD Study Committee