



**CAN Board of Directors Meetings**

Meetings of the CAN Board of Directors will be held at the Dorchester County Library (303 Gay Street, Cambridge), subject to availability, on the following dates.

Any alternate locations, when necessary, will be announced at least one week prior to the meeting.

- Thursday, **July 27**, at 6:30 pm
- Thursday, **September 21**, at 6:30 pm
- Saturday, **November 18**, at 10 am
- Saturday, **January 13**, at 10 am

**All CAN Board meetings are open to the public. Everyone interested in CAN is invited to attend.**

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

	<u>page</u>
• CAN Mission Statement and Membership Information	2
• President’s Message – Good Things Come in Threes	2
• CAN Membership Committee – CAN Coordinates a Consistent Message with New Print Media	3
• CAN Neighborhood Development Committee – CAN Needs Neighborhood Volunteers	4
• CAN Housing Quality Committee – Non-Conforming Uses	5
• CAN Housing Quality Committee – Letter to Cambridge Planning Commission	5
• CAN Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (June 15, 2017)	6
• CAN Board of Directors Meeting Minutes (May 20, 2017)	7
• Historic Preservation Commission (HCP) – Update (May 20, 2017)	9
• Historic Preservation – Alternative Replacement Materials Symposium	11
• Cambridge Façade Improvement Program	12
• Cooperating Community Organizations	12
○ Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC) – State of the Rivers Report Card	12
○ Dorchester Family YMCVA – Pickle Ball Fun for All Ages	13
○ Dorchester Family YMCA – News, Events, and Programs	14
○ Habitat for Humanity	15
○ Nathan of Dorchester	16
• Commissioner’s Corner – Cambridge Matters: Messages from Commissioner Steve Rideout	16
○ City Council – May 22	16
○ White Paper on Tax Assessment and Tax Rates	19
○ Planning and Zoning Commission – June 6	21
○ Historic Preservation Commission – June 8	24
○ City Council – June 12	25

**CAN’s Website** – <https://cambridgecan.org>

**CAN on FaceBook** – <https://www.facebook.com/CambridgeAssociationofNeighborhoods/>

**Contact CAN** – [CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com](mailto:CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com)



## **CAN's MISSION**

The Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN) fosters neighborhood cohesion and community involvement to (a) enhance the quality of community life for all residents of Cambridge through community events, social activities, and neighborly assistance; and (b) protect and enhance the value of properties in Cambridge by improving building and zoning codes, supporting adherence to those codes, and engaging constructively with City Government, including the Historic Preservation Commission.

CAN engages the Cambridge Community by encouraging the development of self-identified neighborhood "blocks" through which members both (a) address their own neighborhood-specific concerns (e.g., individual neighbors needing assistance/support), and (b) leverage the combined energy and influence of CAN to advance common goals (e.g., zoning standards and enforcement).

CAN is committed to transparency. Timely notification is provided to all CAN members of the Annual membership meeting, special membership meetings, and meetings of the Board of Directors. All meetings of the Board of Directors are open to the entire membership. Meeting minutes are posted to the CAN website in a timely fashion. Financial audits will be conducted annually and posted to the website.

---

## **CAN MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

CAN welcomes members from **any and all Cambridge neighborhoods** who are interested in organizing and working together, building a diverse membership reflecting the diversity of Cambridge residents.

**Individual Membership.** Any person at least 18 years of age residing within or owning property within the limits of Cambridge is eligible for individual membership in CAN (thus including full time residents, part time residents, property owners, and renters). **Organizational Membership.** Any business or other entity located within the city limits of Cambridge that is interested in fostering CAN's goals is eligible for organizational membership. **Dues.** Annual membership dues for both individuals and organizations are currently set at \$20. Dues are reviewed annually by the CAN Board of Directors and may be modified based on CAN's financial needs. The Board of Directors also welcomes proposals (e.g., volunteer work) to reduce dues for low-income individuals and non-profit organizations interested in membership.

Additional membership information is available on the CAN website at <http://cambridgecan.org/join-can>

---

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Good things come in threes. I would like to highlight efforts by Judd Vickers and his band of hard workers on the CAN Housing Quality Committee for their efforts in developing a list of long-vacant homes in the Historic District. Greg Boss has developed a computer program to track the homes, and Susan Morgan has



agreed to monitor the homes so that they are not converted into multi-family units, which would be in violation of City Codes. Help is always needed on this committee.

Michelle Barnes, CAN Membership Director, has designed new door hangers and mailers for CAN to help recruit new members. These are very attractive and, hopefully, will help get CAN's name out into the Community more effectively.

Our third effort comes from the CAN Neighborhood Development Committee. Cindy Smith, captain of the West End Avenue neighborhood, has done a terrific job with some clean ups and has scheduled a porch painting for this Saturday to help out a neighbor. The Choptank and Belvedere neighborhoods are planning social events to get the neighbors together.

So thanks to the above mentioned people for getting involved in the community and to the many others in our neighborhoods who are working to make Cambridge "a great place to be."

Chuck McFadden, President, CAN

---

### **CAN MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE – CAN COORDINATES A CONSISTENT MESSAGE WITH NEW PRINT MEDIA!**

As CAN Membership Director, I'm excited to announce that we have received our new printed media materials, and they are available for distribution now!! In order to market our group effectively to potential new members, I believe that it is vital for us to have a consistent message to present. There are a number of reasons that we should focus on an overall consistency in messaging. First, in keeping a concise and uniform message as our base, we allow for clarity of our goals and purpose. Also, if the same basic underlying message supports what we present, and that message goes out repeatedly, then it will stick in people's minds. And it makes it easier for people to recognize who we are when someone mentions us. These printed materials also help 'legitimize' us.

The goal in designing the print media was simply to get the basic information out there, in easy to understand, digest manner, keeping the format short. Every print media developed includes our Facebook and website site locations for anyone who wants more in-depth information or wants to contact us.

I think we look like a very organized, dedicated, and here for the 'long-term' group with our lovely new printed media. We have door hangers, which we are looking forward to disseminating throughout all the areas of the city. For current block captains, and those just willing to put in a wee-bit of time, contact Chuck to pick up a stack of door hangers. Then let us know where you're heading (so we don't double 'hang') – maybe it's your street, your neighborhood, your friend's street, or an entirely new spot. The time you spend is up to you – maybe you just hang the door hanger and walk on, maybe you knock and chat, maybe some combination. I'm planning to schedule a designated door hanger day – let's all spend an hour where we can meet up then disperse, alone or in a group, for an hour or so. Getting the word out is our big goal right now.



Additionally, we have some oversize postcards mailers. One is a mailer to send to those folks who came to check out a meeting, but have not joined, and the other is a general mailer to send out. If you know some people new to your neighborhood, or specific people you think would be interested – let us know and we'll get a 'Hi- check us out!' postcard in the mail to them. If you would like to have a few of the postcards to hand out to people you may run into in your daily travels, by all means let us know!!

We have started with 1,000 door hangers, 1,000 general postcards, and 500 'thanks for coming to a meeting postcards' – If we can turn those materials into at least 100 new paying members, and a need for more print media, we will be off to a great start!

Michelle Barnes, CAN Membership Director

PS: [Shakespeare in the Park](#). Late one Friday afternoon, I happened to see in the Cambridge Main St newsletter that a play would be presented at 6:00 that night in Long Wharf Park; specifically, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed by the Shore Shakespeare group ([www.shoreshakespeare.com](http://www.shoreshakespeare.com)). Having had a very long week working, I decided to head on over. I pulled out my farmer's market shopping cart on wheels, tossed in a lawn chair, grabbed some various salad & cheese & crackers from my Emily's trip, poured a tall glass of white wine into a travel cup and walked down to the park. At 5:30, I was settled in, munching and sipping, as folks came in for the show, blankets, chairs and food in tow. The crowd was not huge, but they were all happy for the fun and ranged from young to older. The weather was perfection and the actors enthusiastic and amusing. It was a lovely way to spend a Friday evening in our City. Here's to more and more of these fun events, and to our members hanging out to enjoy them!

---

## CAN NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – CAN NEEDS NEIGHBORHOOD VOLUNTEERS

CAN is in desperate need of a **VOLUNTEER** to **CHAIR** the **Neighborhood Development Committee**, as well as volunteer **"BLOCK CAPTAINS"** so we can reach **every neighborhood in Cambridge**.

**Neighborhoods** are the heart and soul of CAN. The CAN Neighborhood Development Committee encourages the development of **self-identified neighborhood groups (i.e., "Blocks")** through which members both (a) address the specific concerns of their own neighborhood "Block" (e.g., helping individual neighbors needing assistance or support), and (b) leverage the combined energy and influence of CAN to advance common goals across the City (e.g., zoning standards and enforcement). Neighborhood **"Blocks"** are loosely defined to meet the needs of each **self-identified neighborhood group**. A "Block" can literally be as small as one City block, can cover several City blocks on the same street, or even encompass multiple streets – the "Block" is defined by the those neighbors willing to work together to address neighborhood concerns. Although neighborhood concerns may vary widely across the City, CAN's goal is to bring neighborhood "Blocks" together to identify and prioritize commonalities and take action on shared concerns. Neighborhood **"Block Captains"** organize social events and other activities through which people get to know their neighbors, identify concerns, and work together to address those concerns.

If interested in volunteering, please contact Chuck McFadden at [Ragtime31@gmail.com](mailto:Ragtime31@gmail.com) or [CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com](mailto:CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com)



---

## **CAN HOUSING QUALITY COMMITTEE – NON-CONFORMING USES**

The CAN Housing Quality Committee (HQC) is working to identify Non-Conforming uses of properties that are in continuous use or have been abandoned. As an example, a single-family home that was converted to a three-unit apartment house would be considered non-conforming in the neighborhood conservation zoning districts. Should the use become abandoned for a certain period of time, the property must revert back to the proper use under zoning. The HQC identified two non-conforming apartment houses that had been vacant and abandoned for a number of years due to foreclosure of the landlord. The new owner attempted to continue the non-conforming use. The HQC worked with the City to enforce the code and these properties will not be permitted to continue with the non-conforming use.

Judd Vickers – Chair, CAN Housing Quality Committee

---

## **CAN HOUSING QUALITY COMMITTEE – LETTER TO CAMBRIDGE PLANNING COMMISSION**

At recommendation of the CAN Housing Quality Committee and with the approval of the CAN Executive Committee, CAN sent the following letter to the City of Cambridge Planning Commission regarding the property at 421 Maryland Avenue.

Dear Commission Members:

The Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN) would like to express its opposition to the proposal by Mr. James Schneider to create seven (7) apartment units at 421 Maryland Avenue. This use is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood, which consists mostly of single-family dwellings, a handful of two-dwelling homes and light commercial uses.

The referenced property was historically comprised of two separate lots, each with a single family home, constructed in the early 1900's. This use continued until sometime in the late 1980's, when both were acquired and physically combined into one structure and utilized as a medical practice for a number of years, with two apartments above the practice. Perhaps the abandonment of the medical use and years of vacancy indicate that the historic use as two-single family dwellings was most appropriate and sustainable.

CAN would encourage the property owner and Planning Commission to work with the surrounding neighborhood to provide for a use that is compatible with the neighborhood. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Charles McFadden, President



---

## **CAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (June 15, 2017)**

**Executive Committee Attendees:** Judd Vickers, Mary Ellen Jesien, Chuck McFadden

**Additional Attendees:** Roman Jesien, Michelle Barnes

CAN President Chuck McFadden opened the meeting at 6:30 pm at 207 Belvedere Avenue

1. CAN Treasurer Mary Ellen Jesien gave a financial report stating that we had \$983.76 in the bank but she was expecting a bill from Membership Director Michelle Barnes for the door hangers and mailers of approximately \$350.00. Michelle then gave her the bill. Mary Ellen reported that we have 50 paid members.
2. Chuck McFadden led a discussion about the possibility of having closed Board meetings in order to encourage more candid feedback from Board Members. Those in attendance advised that we need to try harder to elicit candid feedback from Board Members while keeping Board meetings open to all members and the public.
3. Judd Vickers led a series of discussions on Housing Quality. His committee is doing several projects such as identifying owners of houses, developing statistics on various issues – crime, police calls, foreclosures, etc. – and overlaying them in the different neighborhoods. Susan Morgan has volunteered to track vacant homes to ensure that they are not converted into multiple units against the City Codes. Several ideas developed on topic, including a suggestion from Michelle Barnes that we notify owners when the City Code time line has expired and tell them that we would like to work with them on converting the home back to a single dwelling. Frank Cooke, a CAN board member, recently stopped two owners from converting houses into multiple units against City Code. Thanks to Frank for his efforts. Judd indicated that volunteers are need to help covering meetings of the Planning and Zoning Commission.
4. Michelle Barnes was asked if should would consent to being nominated to fill one of the vacant seats on the CAN Board of Directed. Michelle agreed to be nominated, and the Board will vote on her nomination at its next meeting in accordance with the CAN Bylaws.
5. Michelle handed out the new “door hangers” and mailers, which were recognized as excellent. Chuck agreed to disseminate them to the neighborhood captains so they could get them out. There was also a discussion on getting into new communities. Michelle requested a “day” for volunteers to go into new communities and distribute door hangers. It was suggested that we find interested people in the neighborhoods before we go in so that we have some local support. It was noted that we should focus on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> wards for expansion. Michelle also asked for a copy of the attendance lists from previous CAN meetings so we could mail out the new cards to those attendees.
6. Judd requested that we set up a schedule of Board and Member meetings for the rest of the year and suggested that all such meetings be held at the same place. The group agreed on the following dates:



Thursday, July 27 at 6:30 pm; Thursday, September 21, at 6:30 pm; Saturday, November 18 at 10 am; and Saturday, January 13 at 10 am. It was suggested that all meetings be held at the Library, and Chuck will check to see if the dates are open.

7. Chuck reminded everyone of the June 19<sup>th</sup> deadline to get articles to Tom Puglisi for the newsletter. Michelle and Judd said they would have something this weekend.

The meeting was closed at 8:00 pm

---

## CAN BOARD OF DIRECTOR MEETING MINUTES (May 20, 2017 – Open to the Public)

**Board Members Present:** Chuck McFadden (President), Mary Ellen Jesien (Treasurer), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), Roman Jesien, Sharon Smith, Dave Thatcher, and Jackie Vickers, constituting a Quorum of the Board under Bylaws Section 11 (seven of nine members being present)

**Board Members Absent:** Judd Vickers (Vice-President), Frank Cooke

1. **Welcome and Approval of Minutes.** CAN President Chuck McFadden opened the meeting at 10:00 am by welcoming the members of the Board, as well as approximately 15 members of the public in attendance. Chuck introduced the minutes of the March 19, 2017 meeting, which were distributed via email earlier this week. It was moved and seconded that the Board approve the March 19 minutes as distributed, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote of Board members present.
2. **President's Report.** Chuck McFadden reported that CAN's Communications Committee and Housing Quality Committee were both firmly established and running smoothly. However, Chuck indicated that the Neighborhood Development Committee currently lacks a permanent Chairperson and that recruitment of Block Captains has been disappointing. Recruitment of Neighborhood Block Captains will require additional discussion (see Block Captain report below).
3. **Treasurer's Report.** CAN Treasurer Mary Ellen Jesien reported a current balance of approximately \$866.90 in CAN's Treasury. Recent expenses include \$90 for a post office box and \$54 for copying. CAN's incorporation papers and submission for 501(c)(3) tax exempt status have been finalized and submitted at a cost of \$400. Tax exempt status should be granted if the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) raises no additional questions within the next 90 days. CAN currently lists 48 paid memberships.
4. **Secretary's Report.** CAN Secretary Tom Puglisi reported that CAN's website and Facebook pages have now been operating for approximately two months and that they are being updated on a continuing basis by Brooks Bridges and Janet Boss, respectively. The website now includes PayPal capability to facilitate payment of membership dues. Two issues of CAN's Newsletter have been distributed though the email distribution lists maintained by Dave Thatcher. The Committee hopes to establish a schedule and publish a Newsletter once a month. The Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy provided articles for the first two Newsletters, but help is needed in identifying additional contributors to keep the Newsletter interesting and current. [NOTE: As indicated at the March meeting, goals for the coming



year include expanding use of the CAN website and Facebook page (e.g., adding a “resources” page with links to other useful sites), inviting all interested City Council Commissioners to provide updates and comments for CAN’s monthly Newsletter, increasing participation of additional Neighborhoods across all of Cambridge, and conducting one or more surveys of community issues and concerns.]

CAN website: <http://www.cambridgecan.org/>

CAN FaceBook <https://www.facebook.com/CambridgeAssociationofNeighborhoods/>

Contact CAN: [CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com](mailto:CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com)

- 5. Membership Director’s Report.** Chuck McFadden reported that Michelle Barnes has volunteered to serve as CAN’s Membership Director. Michelle has extensive experience in networking and community outreach, having run successfully for county-wide office in the past. Michelle is working with Judd Vickers to develop materials for Neighborhood Block Captains to use in building neighborhood cohesion and recruiting members. Door hangers and post cards have been designed and will be distributed widely throughout Cambridge. Michelle is developing an outreach plan for implementation in September to address churches and community groups throughout Cambridge in an effort to increase membership diversity and expand the number of participating neighborhoods. Board Members suggested that CAN also needs to initiate a concerted program of outreach to businesses in Cambridge, including not only those on Poplar and Race Streets but throughout the City.
- 6. Housing Quality Committee Report.** Chuck McFadden reported on behalf of Housing Quality Committee Chair Judd Vickers. Members of the Housing Quality Committee regularly attend meetings of the Planning and Zoning Commission to identify emerging issues. The Committee circulates and posts (via email and the CAN website) summaries of the meetings and attempts to highlight issues of particular concern. The Committee is also developing a database of problem houses (often rental properties) and/or resident owners who might need assistance from their Neighborhood Block for upkeep and repairs. One challenge in building the database is that ownership is sometimes difficult to determine. It was noted that Cambridge has very weak and inconsistent Code enforcement and exercises little enforcement leverage other than imposing fines and liens, which are often not collected until the property changes ownership. It was noted that the nationally recognized Cambridge Blight Study focused on Ward 3 but may be expanded to the entire City with meter readers assisting in updating existing records. The February 2017 report on the Blight Study is available on the City’s website at [http://www.choosecambridge.com/uploads/agenda\\_docs/02272017RS/23%20--%20Ward%203%20Blight%20Study.pdf](http://www.choosecambridge.com/uploads/agenda_docs/02272017RS/23%20--%20Ward%203%20Blight%20Study.pdf)
- 7. Neighborhood Development Committee Report.** Chuck McFadden reported that the Neighborhood Development Committee still lacks a permanent Chair, although Membership Director, Michelle Barnes has agreed to the coordinate the Committee temporarily. Six Neighborhood Block Captains have been identified for areas in the West End, two of which have been very active, but recruitment of Neighborhood Block Captains outside the West End has so far not occurred. Chuck suggested that the recruitment of additional Neighborhood Block Captains may be dependent upon first expanding CAN’s membership, especially related to the diversity of members and inclusion of neighborhoods outside the West End, which has been a primary goal since CAN’s inception. An immediate need is for the Committee to develop a specific list of duties and expectations for Neighborhood Block Captains, as well as resources that can be easily accessed, adapted, and utilized by individual Block Captains in fulfilling





these duties/expectations. It was noted that involving residents who lack internet access represents a particular challenge, and it was suggested that CAN modify its original decision to rely solely on electronic communications. Tom Puglisi will explore placing announcements in areas newspapers.

**8. Relationships with Outside Organizations / Community Partnerships.** Chuck McFadden reported that he continues to receive inquiries from a number of community organizations that they are anxious to partner with CAN on matters of mutual interest. Partnerships with these organizations serve the dual purposes of increasing CAN's visibility and making positive, concrete contributions to benefit the Cambridge community. Chuck emphasized that CAN's immediate challenge is to enroll sufficient numbers of members to make such partnerships feasible. Interested organizations include Habitat for Humanity, the Dorchester County Family YMCA, Delmarva Community Services, Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC), the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Snip and Tuck, Baywater Animal Rescue, Dorchester Citizens for Planned Growth, and others. Chuck noted that CAN participated actively in the MRC April 1 Cleanup, and that the following organizations are seeking assistance:

- a. MRC needs volunteers to assist in its May 30 planting activity at St. Luke's Church (712 Bradley Avenue, Cambridge).
- b. Baywater Animal Rescue needs dog walkers and cat smugglers.
- c. Delmarva Community Services needs food donations, including "fun" food for kids, especially during the summer.
- d. WHCP seeks participation in planning a program to stimulate open discussion in the community on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cambridge riots.

One attendee noted that the skipjack, Nathan of Dorchester, which is based in Cambridge, is always looking for volunteer crew, and that the Nathan has a current specific need for an additional licensed. For information see the Nathan's website at [www.skipjack-nathan.org](http://www.skipjack-nathan.org), phone them at 410-228-7141, or email them at [info@skipjack-nathan.org](mailto:info@skipjack-nathan.org).

**9. Historic Preservation Commission (HPC).** CAN Board Member Sharon Smith, who also serves as Vice Chair of the Cambridge HPC, presented an update on the HPC's current vision and goals. *NOTE: Sharon's complete report is included provided in the next section of this Newsletter.*

**10.** A motion to adjourn was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.

---

## CAMBRIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION UPDATE (MAY 20, 2017)

CAN Board Member Sharon Smith, who also serves as Vice Chair of the Cambridge Historic Preservation Committee (HPC), presented an update on the HPC's current vision and goals at the May 20 CAN Board of Directors meeting. She noted that while she and Chair Ron Berman are continuing as HPC members, the City Council recently appointed three new members (Herschel Johnson, Susan Morgan, and George Vojitech) and that the HPC has developed an improvement plan to (a) increase efficiency and effectiveness, (b) initiate a more interactive program of community contact, and (c) take a more activist approach in encouraging preservation of homes in the Historic District.



Sharon noted that although the waterfront and the Historic District constitute two of the most important attractions for bringing visitors to Cambridge, Commissioners have traditionally received little or no training related to their duties, and current Commissioners are paying personally to participate in an upcoming workshop in Rockville on the use of synthetic materials in preservation projects.

The HPC recognizes that there is a great need to update its guidelines (which are legally binding inside the Historic District) because the existing guidelines fail to address certain frequently encountered questions (e.g., solar panels and sheds) and are, in many cases, difficult for homeowners to understand and equally difficult for the Commissioners to interpret. A small grant has been obtained for help in re-writing the HPC guidelines, which the HPC hopes will result in increased clarity and consistency in interpretation and implementation, as well as a simplified application process and an increase in the kind and number of projects that can be approved administratively.

To enhance community contact, Susan Morgan has designed a brochure for homeowners, prospective homeowners, and real estate agents to make HPC requirements more widely understood and transparent. In addition, George Vojitech is working with WHCP to produce a weekly 15-minute feature spot to describe HPC requirements and procedures and to answer questions from the Community. HPC hopes to use the City's new website, which is scheduled to go live in August, to interact proactively with Community. HPC also hopes to develop a Customer Satisfaction Survey to obtain substantive feedback about the HPC experience.

In an effort learn more about programs for homeowners in the Historic District, Sharon announced that HPC is sponsoring an Historic Tax Credit Seminar at 6 pm on May 24 in the City Council Chamber. The seminar is open to the public at no cost, and Sharon will provide an article and web links for the CAN Newsletter to help disseminate useful information.

Susan Morgan reiterated that she would like to see application processes streamlined, procedural deadlines established, and administrative approvals expanded. She would also like for HPC to develop lists of acceptable materials, user-friendly checklists for homeowners and Commissioners, work more closely with contractors to clarify standards, and minimize any potentially negative economic effects of HPC procedures and requirements.

In response to questions from attendees, Sharon explained that HPC guidelines categorize buildings as (i) historically significant, (ii) contributing, and (iii) non-contributing structures, and that the HPC tries to interpret its guidelines within this categorical context. Designations of individual properties are available on the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) website at <http://mht.maryland.gov/mihp>. The list of properties (known as the *(Paula) Reed Report*) is available in a single PDF document, which can be accessed by going to the link, choosing "search by MIHP No," and entering "D-699."

*[Thanks to HPC Chair Ron Berman for the following additional information: PDFs for individual properties in the Cambridge Historic District are available using the same link (above). Choose "search by address" and enter the street address you want. This information is based on a study done circa 1975 by Catherine Moore. It also includes updates done by individual researchers after 1975. FYI, an example of a property*



*that features a major information update is 402 Race Street.]*

Sharon indicated that practical considerations have sometimes made HPC's determinations more subjective than she would like, and that the current HPC is attempting to adhere to the objective language of the requirements. She noted that the City is very lax on enforcement and many unauthorized changes have occurred without consequences, which just complicates the HPC decision process because Commissioners have to balance the current standards with legacy problems over which they have no control.

Sharon indicated that HPC members are appointed by the City Council and that the HPC receives staff support from the Planning and Zoning Office within the Department of Public Works.

---

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION – ALTERNATIVE REPLACEMENT MATERIALS SYMOSIUM**

The Maryland Association of Historic District Commissions Presented a Symposium on "Alternative Replacement Materials" for historic structures in Rockville, Maryland on June 10<sup>th</sup>. The day-long event was attended by Cambridge Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) members Ron Berman, Susan Morgan, Sharon Smith, and CAN member Tom Puglisi, along with DPW Planning Assistant LaSara Kinser. Five sessions were presented and a small vendors' hall was available featuring various window, door, trim, and roofing manufacturers.

The most important take-away from this event for Cambridge, gained from survey results from a study conducted by Thomason and Associates, was in comparing the Cambridge HPC's implementation standards with the implementation standards of other HPCs within Maryland and across the country. In general, the Cambridge HPC's rulings regarding the use of replacement materials in the Historic District fall in the middle of the pack, being neither the most restrictive nor the most lenient. In contrast, the implementation standards of the Annapolis, Frederick, and St. Michaels HPCs tend to be more restrictive than those of the Cambridge HPC.

Other tidbits of interest gleaned during the sessions include the following:

- Vinyl fencing is not widely allowed in historic districts, especially in front elevations.
- Historic preservation in the U.S. began in the 1960's and culminated in the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act and Executive Order 11593 in 1973, which were aimed at preserving old federal government buildings. The Secretary of the Interior's preservation guidelines on which our design guidelines are based were originally written for federal buildings.
- Society + environment + economy = sustainability. It is still "greener" to maintain existing buildings than create new ones. The architectural community has an Architecture 2030 Challenge, striving to create only carbon neutral buildings by then. Distinctive buildings 50 years of age and older are eligible for historic registry.



- There is a “new” imported material called *Accoya*, acetylated wood, which is pressure-treated using acetic acid (vinegar) and guaranteed to last 50 years above-ground. However, it is currently more expensive than Hardie products.
- Vinyl replacement windows do not last. Better payback to improve building’s insulation and air-tightness and repair old windows, as only 10% of heat loss is through windows. See the Windows Preservation Standards Collaborative.
- Baltimore City has several Historic Districts, but uses the same set of design guidelines for all.

In other HPC activities, preparation for the information brochure and WHCP interviews are nearing completion.

---

## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The City of Cambridge has a small grant program (up to 50% of project costs with maximum award of \$7500) for façade improvement projects for homes and businesses located within the Sustainable Community Boundary. For details, contact the Cambridge Economic Development Department at 410 Academy Street, Cambridge, 410-221-6074.

---

## COOPERATING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

### MIDSHORE RIVERKEEPER CONSERVANCY (MRC) – STATE OF THE RIVERS REPORT CARD

On May 25th at the Cambridge Yacht Club, Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC) released its 2016 State of the Rivers Report Card grades for the health of the Choptank River. In summary, the overall grade for the Choptank River is improving and some areas are showing greater advancement in water quality. But when breaking down grades into upper and lower regions, there are still many areas that are getting worse, mainly the upper portion of the river.

Grades are determined by evaluating several different indicators determined by water quality monitoring at 50 sites along the river, conducted from May through October. The lower Choptank River, including Harris Creek, Broad Creek and the Tred Avon River, saw an improvement from a B in 2015 to a B+ in 2016. The upper Choptank River, from the town of Choptank up to Greensboro, saw a declining trend from a C+ in 2015 to a C in 2016.


"We saw water quality and habitat improvements in some areas throughout the river which is extremely encouraging," says Choptank Riverkeeper Matt Pluta. "But we are also seeing areas in the headwaters of our river that are continuing to decline in overall water quality. What we learned over the past few years is that below average rainfall reduces pollutant inputs, which improves water quality. Our goal in the years ahead is to limit the amount of inputs entering the waterway from the land, even when we have average or above average rainfall. Only then will we start to see an increasing trend in water quality throughout the entire Choptank River system."



Also at the May 25th event, members of the Cambridge Clean Water Advisory Committee presented the great work they are doing in and around the City of Cambridge in efforts to protect local water quality.

For a full view of the 2016 Report Card for the Choptank and other Midshore rivers, visit the MRC website at <http://www.midshoreriverkeeper.org/river-news/report-cards/>, and for a more detailed summary of the May 25th event, read the great article by Cathy Beise in the Dorchester Banner at <http://www.dorchesterbanner.com/dorchester/riverkeepers-present-state-choptank-river-2016/>

Matthew J. Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper



**the**  
YMCA

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
 FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
 FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## Pickle Ball

### FUN FOR ALL AGES

**P** Pickleball is one of America’s fastest growing sports. Players call it the most addicting sport....and it has nothing to do with a pickle!

**I**

**C** This fun recreational sport combines components of tennis, badminton and ping-pong into an easy to learn game that can be enjoyed by players of all ages.

**K**

**L** Pickleball is a great way to get active and make new friends.

**E**

**B** **Join Dave Thatcher (avid player, pickleball enthusiast and Y volunteer) at the Glasgow Outdoor Tennis Courts (weather permitting) to learn more and meet others who play.**

**A**

**L**


**L**

**F** Equipment will be available to try so no worries if you don’t own a paddle. And stay tuned for ... the Dorchester YMCA will be bringing pickleball indoors at the Y in the fall!

**R**

**E** **Mondays in June (12th, 19th, and 26th) and Wednesdays in June (14th, 21st, 28th) at 10:30am and 6:00pm**

**E**



**C**

**L**

**I**


**N**

**I**

**C**

**S**

Dorchester County Family YMCA  
 201 Talbot Avenue  
 Cambridge, MD 21613  
 410-221-0505 [www.dorchesterymca.org](http://www.dorchesterymca.org)



**the**  
YMCA



# CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Building a Better Community, Block by Block



## NEWS, EVENTS & PROGRAMS

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Join us for the Heart of the Chesapeake Bike Tour fundraiser on Saturday, July 22, 2017. The bike tour will include three ride choices, including a 64 mile metric century, a 30 mile tour, and a 9 mile family ride. Proceeds from the Heart of the Chesapeake Bike Tour will support the Y in two meaningful ways...the Bob Brannock Endowment Fund designed to ensure that the Y is able to maintain our important commitment to our community in the decades to come and the Y's Scholarship Fund which supports the immediate needs of individuals, children and families in our community who need the services and support of the YMCA.

**Pick up a flyer or register on [www.active.com](http://www.active.com)**

Raffle tickets for sale at the front desk, \$5 each or \$20 for 5 tickets!

The prize is a \$1000 gift certificate, redeemable at On the Rivet Cycle & Sport. Can be used toward any bike, kayak, or merchandise.

### Give... For a Better Us

This month we begin our annual campaign to raise the charitable funds needed to address the issues that impact our community...our kids, our seniors and our working families. Every dollar donated to the Dorchester Family YMCA stays local and has a lasting impact.

Your support helps hundreds of youth and families live healthier and happier lives. It enables kids to do better in school. It provides seniors with opportunities to connect with others. And it enables those in our community who receive scholarship support the opportunity to express their appreciation by volunteering service hours to help our community get stronger.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today and take your first step in making a difference and building a better us. You can donate online by going directly to our website...[www.dorchesteryma.org](http://www.dorchesteryma.org) and selecting contribute from the top menu bar and dropping down to donate now or you may send us a check or call us with a credit card at 410-221-0505.



### "Community Connection" Family Fun Day June 24

On June 24, 2017, the Dorchester County Family YMCA's Togetherhood Committee is partnering with Anchor Point to host its inaugural "Community Connection" event. Community Connection is a free family fun day open to the public and designed to connect families to one another and to community resources through games, activities, food, music and sharing.

The event will be held outside at the Dorchester Family YMCA from 11am to 3pm. In case of rain, the event will be moved inside to the gym.

To sign up as an event volunteer, vendor or sponsor, please contact: Heather Shoemaker, Togetherhood Committee Chair by email [hdshoemaker@gmail.com](mailto:hdshoemaker@gmail.com) or phone (240) 523-3705.



### Pickle Ball Free Clinics



Pickleball is one of America's fastest growing sports. This fun recreational sport combines components of tennis, badminton and ping pong into an easy to learn game that can be enjoyed by players of all ages.

Join Dave Thatcher (avid player, pickleball enthusiast and Y volunteer) at the Glasgow outdoor Tennis Courts (weather permitting) to learn more and meet others who play.

Mondays in June (12th, 19th, and 26th) and Wednesdays in June (14th, 21st, and 28th) at 10:30AM and 6:00PM  
Pick up a flyer at the front desk!



## HABITAT CHOPTANK RECEIVES \$40,000.00 LOWE'S GRANT FOR CAMBRIDGE'S HISTORIC PINE-HIGH ST AREA NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

*Lowe's Heroes to Complete Safety and Home Preservation Repairs for Eligible Home Owners*

**Cambridge, MD (June 7, 2017)** — Habitat for Humanity Choptank has been awarded a \$40,000 grant from Lowe's to participate in the revitalization of the Historic Pine - High Street area in Cambridge as part of Habitat for Humanity's Neighborhood Revitalization, a nationwide program dedicated to serving more families through community development partnerships. Lowe's awarded \$1.75 million in grants to 22 Habitat affiliates across the country to support more than 84 community improvement projects ranging from critical repairs to new home construction. Habitat for Humanity Choptank will use the funds to complete critical exterior home repairs for eligible homeowners in the community. The program will focus on safety and accessibility improvements as well as repairs to correct code violations.

Habitat Choptank holds open community meetings on the first Friday of every month at Liv Again (317 High Street, Cambridge) to bring together interested community residents, non-profits, agencies, and members of the City council members and staff. "Housing repair has been the top conversation at each meeting," says Rhodana Fields, neighborhood revitalization manager for Habitat Choptank. "The City of Cambridge has set a goal of reducing housing blight. Homeowners are seeking a way to preserve the history of the community, and to keep families from having to move out as the property owner's age and have fewer resources to make necessary repairs. This partnership with Lowe's creates an opportunity to address these issues."

Through Habitat's Neighborhood Revitalization efforts, Habitat affiliates offer an expanded array of housing services and partner with local residents, housing leaders, community groups and businesses to transform neighborhoods and enhance the quality of life in communities.

"Involvement from the business community is so vital. We're grateful to Lowe's for their generous support in our community and around the U.S.," said Nancy Andrew, executive director of Habitat Choptank. "Through their support of this program, we are able to make a difference for families in our neighborhood and help build strength, stability and self-reliance in communities."

A national partner since 2003, Lowe's has committed more than \$63 million to Habitat for Humanity and helped more than 6,500 families improve their living conditions. Each year, Lowe's provides grants and volunteer assistance to affiliates, supports National Women Build Week and conducts how-to clinics at stores to teach volunteers construction skills.

"Lowe's shares Habitat's vision that having a safe, stable home helps bring strength, security and pride to families and ultimately communities," said James Frison, Lowe's community relations director. "It's important for us to support Habitat's Neighborhood Revitalization program and help revive neighborhoods like the Historic Pine Street Area, making them places where people love to live."

### **About Habitat for Humanity Choptank.**

Since 1992, Habitat Choptank has partnered with 190 local households to improve a place they call home. One hundred and eighteen of those families have been served through weatherization services since Habitat Choptank initiated its neighborhood revitalization program in 2015. Seventy-two families have purchased new or rehabbed homes from the nonprofit and currently eight local home buyers are working through the home ownership program. Six homes are under construction at this time with plans to start at least six more over the coming year. Income qualifying home buyers are offered access to affordable mortgage financing in order



## CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Building a Better Community, Block by Block

to purchase a new construction or rehabbed home from the nonprofit's project inventory of durable and energy efficient homes. After completing "sweat equity" hours, attending pre-homeownership classes, and meeting debt reduction and savings goals, these individuals and families will purchase homes that they helped construct and assume the full responsibilities of home ownership including maintaining their home, paying property taxes and repaying their mortgage over 30 to 33 years. Habitat accepts applications for its housing programs throughout the year. To donate, volunteer or apply, visit [habitatchoptank.org](http://habitatchoptank.org) or call 410-476-3204.

---

### NATHAN OF DORCHESTER

The Skipjack Nathan of Dorchester invites you to sail on the beautiful Choptank River from historic Cambridge. The Nathan was commissioned on July 4, 1994. Funded by contributors and built by volunteers, the Nathan was built to preserve the wooden boat building skills and maritime heritage of the region. She was the last Skipjack to be built as an oyster dredge boat. Regular two-hour public sails are available each Saturday that the Nathan is in port, May through October departing from Long Wharf, and one-hour sails are available one Sunday each month. For information call 410-228-7141, access our website at [www.skipjack-nathan.org](http://www.skipjack-nathan.org), or email us at [info@skipjack-nathan.org](mailto:info@skipjack-nathan.org).

---

### COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

**CAMBRIDGE MATTERS: MESSAGES FROM COMMISSIONER STEVE RIDEOUT** ([swrideout@aol.com](mailto:swrideout@aol.com))

#### CITY COUNCIL – May 24, 2017

This has already been a busy week for me with a very long City Council meeting on Monday and on Tuesday a visit to the Harriet Tubman Visitors Center followed by a meeting at the East New Market Fire Department regarding the future of health care in Dorchester County. Ken Kozel, President and CEO of Shore Regional Health made the presentation.

On Monday, there were several important decisions made at the city council meeting that I will address in some detail later, as they will impact our community and its quality of life.

Before the general meeting there was a closed meeting to discuss "pending or threatened/potential litigation". Information was shared on this issue but no decisions were asked for or made regarding it. Having a closed meeting on issues such as this is standard and allowed under the state Open Meetings Act.

At the general meeting the first item of business was a request by Gene and Shirley Tolley that the city sponsor a project to make improvements to 513-517 Race Street, which is the Tolley Theater, by submitting a grant application to the State of Maryland. This matter was brought to the attention of staff close to our meeting date and so could not be properly investigated in time. The request was denied with the understanding that council would consider non-financial support of a project upon the completion and





review of a business plan for redevelopment of the property. Jay Corvan, the Architect on the project, was particularly interested in improving the street scape for the 500 block of Race Street as part of this project.

Following that presentation, several items on the consent calendar were approved. They included the following requests:

1. From the American Legion Dorchester Post 91 to hold a Memorial Day Service at Long Wharf Park on May 29<sup>th</sup> at 11 am-12:30 p.m.
2. From Cambridge Main Street for street closures on July 8<sup>th</sup> (**Taste of Cambridge**) and on September 16<sup>th</sup> (**Summer Send Off**).
3. From Dorchester YMCA for the Firecracker Kids Triathlon-July 4<sup>th</sup>.
4. From the Shore Shakespeare Company to use Long Wharf Park for their production of **A Midsummer Night's Dream** on June 16<sup>th</sup>.
5. For the appropriation of \$5,000 from a gift in that amount to the general fund for reoccurring police uniform expenses.

These and the Minutes of May 8<sup>th</sup> with corrections and the Request from Eastern Shore Network for Change to hold a Run for Unity on July 23<sup>rd</sup> (from which Commissioner Cannon recused himself) were all approved.

We then took up several ordinances. The first was for the Fiscal Year 2018 budget. It was read by title only and continued to June 12<sup>th</sup> for 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, public hearing, and possible adoption.

Other ordinances that had a first reading were all related to making possible changes to the Unified Development Code (UDC) that was adopted in 2014. They were continued to June 12<sup>th</sup> for public hearing and potential adoption. The ordinances addressed the following issues:

1. Rezoning of two parcels of land on Fieldcrest Road (the detention center and a former juvenile treatment facility) from industrial to institutional district.
2. Rezoning 3 parcels of land on Egypt Road that are being considered for a possible solar farm of approximately 320 acres.
3. Creating a sign program for sites in the city more than 20 acres that provides for more design flexibility for those sites. This is aimed at allowing for more appropriate signage for the new Cambridge Market Place site being redeveloped.

Ordinances up for a second reading, public hearing, and passage included the following:

1. Ordinance 1099 will help clear up some definitions in the UDC regarding the meaning of "accessory apartment, accessory building, accessory dwelling unit, ground floor retail, and kitchen".
2. Ordinance 1101 corrects a past mistake regarding microbreweries and distilleries so that they can be allowed in the Downtown/Waterfront Development District Zone with restrictions. By a



note in the staff memo, RAR Microbrewery is grandfathered in and allowed to continue to operate without having to reapply for approval.

3. Ordinance 1102 which allows medium and large scale solar energy systems in a resource conservation zoning district and allows community solar energy systems in all zoning districts except a resource conservation zoning district as special exceptions and subject to certain conditions. Solar energy systems are of growing interest in the State of Maryland, and the property on Egypt Road is being considered for placement of a large system. As no city legislation exists to allow solar energy systems, this ordinance was drafted for that purpose. The development of medium and large scale solar energy systems in the city will bring additional revenue to Cambridge over and above the real estate tax currently generated for open land. The legislation limits the number of acres that would be available in the city for these kinds of projects. After a public hearing and some minor edits to the ordinance, it was adopted by city council.

Public Hearings were then held on some grant applications that city staff will submit to the state. The first will seek \$275,000 in funding to improve drainage at the Housing Authority of Cambridge Development. It passed unanimously after a public hearing. The next application approved unanimously was one for a Pine Street Area Low-Income Homeowner Housing Rehabilitation Program. It seeks \$250,000 and authorizes the city to add a potential match of \$100,000 from anticipated one-time increase in property tax funds from the Beazer Corporation PILOT payment or sale of the tax certificate when/if received. The city is owed approximately \$420,000 from Beazer for unpaid PILOT payments that the city is pursuing for collection. City Council then approved having staff seek additional grants from the state for a sidewalk on Leonard Lane (\$350,000), Façade Improvement (\$100,000), and Retractable Bollards for some downtown streets (\$7,500).

Next on the agenda were the approval of letters of support for the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) application to the state for funding to continue the revitalization of the Packing House and for the Historic Cambridge Development, LLC application to the state for funding to stabilize and improve buildings at 505 and 507 Race Street, next to the Hearn Building rehabilitation.

As Maryland communities seek funding on their own projects and state funds are limited, each community submits a priority list of what it feels are the most important projects. That was done as well on Monday evening.

As we close in on the last few agenda items, an important one came up. It is the privatization of sanitation services for the city. About a 10 days ago city staff provided information at a public workshop on the research that it had done on this issue. They returned Monday evening to recommend that the city move forward with privatizing sanitation services and negotiate a contract with Chesapeake Waste Industries for the same residential service that city workers are currently providing with the addition of providing one large tote for each household for future use. The reason for the large tote is that the new service will have mechanized trucks that will be able to pick up the larger trash cans and deposit the contents into the truck. With this new service citizens will not be able to use old cans for normal service. The city will still provide bulk pick up service and commercial service. The details of those services will be clarified for the community



once a contract is finalized regarding the private services. Curbside recycling is not currently being considered, but we were advised that the company providing the trash service may well be interested in providing individual recycling service to customers for an extra charge to be negotiated between them and interested city residents. Remember also that the city and county have agreed to recycling service containers being placed on Leonard Lane at the DPW site for those who wish to take their recycled materials there rather than including them in their 2 times a week trash pickup.

The Public Safety Building will have an additional solar panel array for their building that will save additional money. The cost of adding it to the building will be paid by a grant through Maryland Smart Energy.

The final items on the agenda for approval were the appointment of Michael Wheatley to the Ethics Commission and the appointment of members to the Ad Hoc Human Services Grant Review Committee. They include Ivory Buck IV, Pam Schulte, and Robin Stanley plus a last-minute candidate from Ward 4, whose name now escapes me.

Regarding my Tuesday evening attendance at the Shore Regional Health presentation on the future of healthcare in Dorchester County, it was well done with helpful information and very good questions from the audience. I am told that the meeting scheduled for Cambridge at Chesapeake College will be in a room that holds about 70 people so be sure to get there early in the event the crowd is large. The alternative is to attend one of the other presentations in Madison or Vienna.

Tuesday, May 23	East New Market Fire Department 4020 East New Market Bypass, East New Market
Wednesday, May 31	Chesapeake College’s Cambridge Center 416-418 Race Street, Cambridge
Thursday, June 8	E. A. Murphy Building 104 Race Street, Vienna
Thursday, June 15	Madison Fire Department 1154 Taylor’s Island Road, Madison.

One final thing. I have done a white paper on real estate assessments and tax rates that may help remind some how they are connected and why increased assessments can lead to lower tax rates. It is attached.

**WHITE PAPER ON TAX ASSESSMENT AND TAX RATES**

How often have you asked to have your Real Estate Assessment increased? While it may seem to be a silly question and one that virtually everyone would answer “never”, it has relevance to our proposed city budget, and what you will pay in real estate taxes in the coming Fiscal Year.

My view regarding the city budget is that government must provide essential services and do it at the lowest possible cost to the tax payer. Every year it must analyze what it spent and is spending to see if the work being done is effective and responsive to the needs of the community and is helping to make for a better community. Prevention and Early Intervention spending is appropriate to reduce potential greater



costs of future needs of a city or county were nothing done. It can keep us from kicking the can down the road.

Since the arrival of the City Manager and Finance Director, Cambridge has been on a path of making your tax dollars work better. This is not a task, however, that is easy or should be done too quickly. Changing the direction of a large and complex organization requires planning before action.

Over the past several weeks there has been much letter writing and discussion about the proposed tax increase for the City of Cambridge to maintain what is called the "Constant Yield". It is the amount of money received in real estate taxes for the current Fiscal Year and the aim to keep that amount of money constant for the next Fiscal Year. While I am certainly not a tax expert, I have heard these discussions for many years here and elsewhere as a homeowner and taxpayer.

The discussion often starts with the fact that Talbot County has a much lower tax rate that causes people to move there while Cambridge has a higher tax rate that keeps people from moving here. What is less often talked about is the level of our Real Estate Tax Assessment here in Cambridge and Dorchester County vs. Talbot County and how accurate the assessment is on each of our properties and how that impacts our tax rate.

Why is that important? It is important because the lower the tax assessment by the state in a locality the higher the tax rate must be to maintain services provided by the city; and the higher the tax assessment is on real estate in a city, the lower the tax rate could be to maintain services by the city. Take a look at Talbot County and their higher property assessments that allow for lower real estate tax rates.

This past month I went on the internet and looked at real estate assessments in different parts of Cambridge. If interested just go to <http://sdat.dat.maryland.gov/RealProperty/Pages/default.aspx> and follow the directions. I looked at the assessment for my home, which went down about \$12,000, and compared it to others on my street and neighboring streets. That caused me to ask the question that started this paper. How many of us have complained about our assessment when it went down or asked that it be raised?

We had our house appraised several years ago by a professional appraiser who indicated that in her opinion it was worth almost twice what the current Real Estate Assessment is for the property. I, of course, did not run to the Real Estate Assessment office and demand that my property assessment be increased, because that would mean that I would be paying more taxes.

We learned this year that the average assessed value of real estate in Cambridge went down 2.3%. That means some property values went up; some stayed the same; and some went down. Because of the proposed increase in the Real Estate Tax Rate to maintain the "Constant Yield", if your assessment went down, you will pay fewer taxes or the same. If your assessment went up or stayed the same, you will pay more.

I also looked at how my home assessment compared to other homes in my neighborhood. Some much larger and well kept homes were only assessed at \$50,000 to \$100,000 more. I know that I would not sell



my home for the assessed value nor would neighbors in the larger homes sell their homes for their assessed value. Were we to sell them, we all know that they are worth more than the assessed value and are willing to see what the market will bear.

If high tax rates scare people away from buying real estate here, a solution is an increase in the value of real estate in the city and with that increase will come increased State Real Estate Assessments of our properties. When that happens, city and county councils will have the opportunity to reduce Real Estate Tax Rates. When real estate sales occur and purchase prices are higher than the state assessment, one would presume that the assessment values on those and comparable properties would increase; but that may not be the case for a couple of years, as real estate assessments in Dorchester County are on a 3-year cycle. In addition, any new assessment may not be the purchase price. That is just one of many considerations in arriving at an assessment. A neighboring house has just been purchased for \$100,000 more than the state assessment. It will be interesting to see when or if the assessment will increase and to what degree it will impact other homes in the neighborhood.

Something that has contributed to the decrease in value of our real estate is the inability of the city to holistically and effectively enforce the City Housing Code. If the city is able to do that, and it will cost money, we can support, encourage, and require all property owners in the city to maintain their properties and not let them deteriorate. The city received a report in the past few months that addressed the amount of substandard housing in Ward 3. The city is seeking state grants to help address some of the challenges discovered in that study, but the bottom line is that there will be a cost to achieve improvements throughout the city. When we are successful, assessments should go up. That will allow city council in the years to come to reduce real estate tax rates and will be another way to encourage people to come here to look for a home.

## **PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION – JUNE 6**

Tonight I filled in for Commissioner Dave Cannon as liaison to the City Planning and Zoning Commission. Dave had a meeting conflict, so I was happy to go and observe the meeting and provide my recollections of what took place. I was very impressed with the professionalism and care that the commission members and staff took with regard to each of the matters that came before them.

Even with a few matters on the agenda, the meeting took almost 2 hours. Commission members Gene Lauer, Marshall Rickert, Jerry Burroughs, Mary Losty, Chan'Tay Nelson, and Herbert Trego and Commission Chair Bill Craig as well as staff members Pat Escher and LaSara Kinser immediately got down to work and remained focused during the entire meeting.

After a moment of silence, the agenda was approved with some changes and the meeting minutes for April 4<sup>th</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup> were approved with some minor modifications. The hearing on the Preliminary Plan for Phase 2 of Cambridge Market Place was continued to the July 11<sup>th</sup> meeting and a 2<sup>nd</sup> June meeting was set for June 18<sup>th</sup> to review the application regarding the Taco Bell Restaurant at Cambridge Market Place.

The next matter for consideration was the request by Thomas Bradley, the owner of 811 Locust Street, to permit a commercial retail store at that location. Ooh La La Hair Salon had been located in this building but



was reported to have recently moved out. Mr. Bradley and his wife are planning to open a women's dress and apparel store in the building and are also looking for a new tenant for the hair salon space. The members of the Commission had a number of questions to clarify the nature of the business which were satisfactorily answered by Mr. Bradley.

As the Board of Zoning Appeals has the authority to approve or deny this request, the Planning and Zoning Commission role is to recommend, not recommend, or recommend the application with conditions; in this instance they unanimously recommended approval of the application.

Next on the agenda was the application of James Schneider to allow 7 apartments and a business to be housed at 421 Maryland Avenue. This building is at the corner of Dorchester Avenue and Maryland Avenue and previously had been two properties combined into one that had a Chiropractor Office downstairs and apartments upstairs. There was disagreement as to how many apartments were in the building, but sufficient evidence appeared to be presented to the Commission that there were only 2 legitimate apartments upstairs while at times in the past more people may have lived there than were allowed.

The building had been bought by Mr. Schneider about a year ago after having been vacant for 10-15 years. Some members of the Commission were very knowledgeable about the property as were a number of neighbors who came to speak in opposition to the application.

After a lengthy presentation, questions, and discussion and at the request of staff for some guidance from the commission, the commission declined to make any recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals and referred the applicant back to staff to further work on possible alternatives. In addition staff was going to look at other properties in the area to determine how many legal apartments were permitted in the neighborhood.

Based on the evidence presented there were only 3 water meters for the building, which was consistent with a business on the ground floor and 2 apartments on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. That is how the zoning for the building was established when the Unified Development Code (UDC) was enacted in 2014.

In sum, it appeared that the Commission found that

1. The proposal was not acceptable in its current form and would not move on to the Board of Zoning Appeals.
2. If the applicant wanted to talk with the owner of a neighboring lot for possible parking for the building, he was free to do that but possibly should make any purchase contingent on obtaining final approval of his plans for the building
3. The applicant may work with city staff, which will be gathering information on other rental properties in the area, and come back with some modified proposal for consideration by the Commission.
4. The property is required to be mixed use – business and residential – and all residential in the building would not be allowed.

Any final recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission will be made at a future meeting, if requested by the applicant.



The final matter on the agenda for decision involved the Farmer's Market that moved this year from Long Wharf to open space on Race Street at Cemetery Avenue. This had been done without proper approvals of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals but was allowed to continue in operation pending application and approval process.

Cambridge Main Street is the applicant, and city staff was recommending that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend to the Board of Zoning Appeals approval of the application for a Special Exception Permit with certain conditions for a period of 5 years. After presentation by staff of the current situation and answers to questions by members of the Commission, the Commission made the recommendation for approval of the farmers' market for 5 years from April 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> each year from 3-6 pm. In addition the applicant needs to attend the next traffic and safety committee meeting for comments and any discussion of this use with the police department. This matter will move on to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a final public hearing on the application.

The move to this new location has had some expected bumps but is experiencing more foot traffic than occurred when it was at Long Wharf. Several of the Commissioners asked why the farmers' market was not returned to the parking lot that it used before going to Long Wharf. They were informed that that location was considered and was felt to be another good possibility in the event the current location was found not to be suitable. With a Special Exception Permit, the city has the right and ability to review the farmers' market at any time and modify the Permit if circumstances require.

With the close of the business agenda, two items were taken up on the discussion agenda. The first was regarding the food truck legislation that had been brought through the Planning and Zoning Commission to City Council. At the first reading of the proposed ordinance at City Council, the motion to move it on to a second reading and public hearing was defeated on a 2-3 vote. As the Commission and staff believe that the city should have legislation that regulates food trucks in the city as do I, the decision was made to bring the matter to the Ordinance Committee of City Council for further discussion. Two members of the Commission – Gene Lauer and Mary Losty – were appointed to represent the Commission in those discussions.

The next item for discussion was a report by LaSara Kinser regarding the GIS Housing Survey Study Program that started June 6<sup>th</sup> through Salisbury University students who will be surveying every property in Cambridge. They did 93 properties today with a computer survey application that was developed by a member of city staff. The aim is to determine the level of housing standards for property within the city limits. This is a follow up to an initiative last fall in Ward 3 that found a significant number of homes that were in substandard condition.

After the survey of the properties in completed in the next 2-3 weeks, a report will be prepared for consideration somewhere near the end of the summer.

With the conclusion of that report and comments and questions from members of the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at around 7:50 p.



## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – JUNE 8**

This past Thursday evening I attended a meeting of the Cambridge Historic Planning Commission (HPC) that was set for the Commission Members to meet with LaSara Kinser, staff to the Commission, to discuss in a public forum some of the ideas from the Commission Members about community outreach and improvement of the HPC process. I attended the meeting as the City Council Liaison to the Commission.

Commission Members in attendance were Janice Olshesky, George Vojtech, and Susan Morgan along with Chair Ron Berman and Vice Chair Sharon Smith. LaSara Kinser, staff to the commission, was also present. The link to the Commission page on the city website is <http://www.choosecambridge.com/index.php/historic-preservation-district/historic-preservation-commission/>

The first item for discussion was an idea that George Vojtech had for providing informational segments about the HPC on WHCP, the local community radio station. George offered an outline of some of the topics that might be discussed with the idea of possibly having a show every couple of weeks with members of the Commission talking about an issue and answering questions posed by the community. Ms. Kinser offered that with the new city website that will, hopefully, be up and running in August, there will be the opportunity to have a FAQ page that can supply information to residents or owners of property in the Historic District.

Those HPC members in attendance agreed to continue to work on this idea in order to provide another way to help the public understand the HPC process better. As part of this outreach effort, I offered to hold a meeting of people interested in the HPC and Historic Preservation issues and have a presentation by one of the HPC members with some time to ask questions. For any of you who receive this report and are interested in attending such a meeting, please email me at the email address above so that I can collect some names and then work with you to set up a convenient date and time to hold such a meeting.

The Commission Chair then moved on to a discussion of administrative matters to see what might be done to help make the HPC process be easier for those people in the community who own property in the Historic District. The first topic involved what matters might be handled by an administrative review.

Under the current guidelines, which will be reviewed and updated in the coming months, there are 13 items listed that are subject to administrative review for “contributing or non-contributing properties”. Those terms refer to whether the property in question is a structure that contributes or does not contribute to the historic nature of the district. Under the guidelines, “...an application for review must be filled out; however it will be reviewed by staff on behalf of the commission, instead of at a meeting”. These would usually be smaller projects. Some important questions were raised in this discussion that the HPC needs to make decisions about as part of the review process.

This led to a discussion of how long it has been since the city had a survey of the historically contributing properties in the Historic District. It has been a long time and it appears that a new survey would be appropriate. Included in the discussion was the need to develop a Pattern Book for the Cambridge Historic





District that would help identify the various styles of architecture found in the properties built in the District and elsewhere in the city. As these are not projects that can be easily done, consideration of funding from state or foundation resources needs to be considered.

The next item for discussion was a brochure about the Cambridge Historic District that Commission Member Susan Morgan has been working on. She distributed a rough draft of the brochure for comment and suggestions of which there were a few helpful ideas. One suggestion was that there be a simple easy to understand brochure to introduce people to the Cambridge Historic District and possibly a second one with more detail on process and procedures. The second one might also be addressed by information on the city website.

Further ideas included providing copies of the brochure at the visitors' center, Chamber of Commerce, Local Realtors, Mainstreet, and other places in town. Once the brochure is finalized and printed, that outreach will take place.

Susan Morgan then raised a concern about HPC members appearing before the commission with regard to projects involving their own properties. Ms. Kinser mentioned that there may be an ethics opinion that relates to that issue. After some discussion, I indicated that I would take a look at those Ethics Opinions that are on the city website to see what that opinion might say and get back to the Commission Members on that issue. I found an opinion that I wrote with advice from the city attorney that can be found at

<http://www.choosecambridge.com/uploads/Ethics/Ethics%2003-2013%20Final.pdf>

While I think that the opinion addresses a different but related problem, ultimately, one of the Commission Members may need to seek an opinion from the Ethics Commission.

The brochure regarding the Cambridge Façade Improvement Program was then handed out at the meeting.

There being no further business, the HPC meeting adjourned.

Let me know if you have questions regarding any of the above.

## **CITY COUNCIL – JUNE 12**

Monday night's city council meeting was a full one. We started at 6:00 p.m. and did not finish until 9:00 p.m.

The quick synopsis of some of the community requests and uncontested matters are as follows:

REQUESTS FROM THE PUBLIC- There were two.

- The first item was from Maces Lane Alumni Association seeking support from the city in developing a community center at the old Maces Lane School. Due to the historic nature of the school and the need for a community center in that portion of Cambridge, efforts are under way by the Alumni



Association and the Good Shepherd Association to address this concern, and they need some assistance from city staff in developing a plan of action and grant application for pre-development costs. City Council directed staff to help prepare a development grant proposal for the Alumni Association and Good Shepherd Association to submit and also help them develop a business plan for services in the proposed community center.

- The second item was a written request by DeAdrein and Sheila Jones for consideration of a change in the UDC that addresses multi-family properties that cease for any reason for a period of 90 days to be used that way. While the Jones' did not appear, under the city code City Council is to refer such matters to the city zoning official for discussion, possible action by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and report back to City Council. The matter was referred to the city zoning official for further action.

After a time for open statements by the public, the city undertook the consent calendar. After some discussion the following matters were addressed:

- The May 8<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> City Council Minutes were approved with a minor edit to the May 24<sup>th</sup> minutes.
- The request by **Cambridge Main Street** for an additional two hours to set up for Taste of Cambridge and Summer Send-Off was granted. Preparation for those events will start at 1:00 p.m. on July 8<sup>th</sup> and September 16<sup>th</sup>.
- The "Groove on Pine" street festival with music set for July 22<sup>nd</sup> was approved for **Eastern Shore Network for Change and Cambridge Main Street**.
- A youth program by **Saving our Communities Kids** was approved for July 29<sup>th</sup>.
- The request by an organization related to Maces Lane High School was denied as no one from the Maces Lane Alumni Association knew who the group was and no one from the group appeared at the meeting.
- The **Boy Scout's** Cubmobile races set for October 1, 2017 on Court Lane were approved.
- A Tent Revival by the **Agape Temple of Praise and Ministries, Inc.** for August 8 and 9, 2017 were approved for a portion of Center Street at the corner of Robbins Street.
- The **Hyatt's** request to shoot fireworks on June 22<sup>nd</sup> was approved subject to fire marshal approval and meeting the requirements of Resolution 15-004.
- The **Rescue Fire Company's** request to hold the Seafood Festival on July 12<sup>th</sup> with July 11<sup>th</sup> set up at Sailwinds Park was approved.
- The community block party sponsored by the **Shorehawks Football Team** for June 24<sup>th</sup> was approved subject to their obtaining a liquor license from the county for any alcohol service. The party make take place without alcohol, if they do not obtain the license from the county.
- The **Cambridge Yacht Club's** request to set no motor boating events on the Choptank, to the extent the city controls such events, on July 20-22, 2018 and August 18-19, 2018 in order that the Yacht



Club can hold their Sail Regatta and Log Canoe races from the Malkus Bridge to Hambrooks Bay was approved.

- The offer by the **Thomas Family Irrevocable Trust** to give property to the city was referred to staff for further study and report back to City Council.

The next order of business was the approval of the FY 2018 budget after a final public hearing along with resolutions adopting staff positions and salary controls and grades for city employees and establishing the Schedule of Fees charged by the City. As Commissioner Foster has family members who work for the city, she recused herself from a portion of this order of business after conferring with the city attorney and abstained with regard to the budget vote. All matters passed unanimously.

City Council then considered ordinances that were presented for 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, public hearings, findings of fact, and possible adoption. The following were taken up and adopted:

- Ordinance 1098 regarding the correction of a zoning error that took place on two institutional properties on Fieldcrest Road that were zoned as industrial rather than institutional. They were zoned as institutional.
- Ordinance 1103 regarding the correction of an error that took place on 319 acres of land on Egypt Road that were zoned for residential use but were not able to be developed. As a result the property was rezoned to Resource Conservation.

With regard to both of these matters, city council heard evidence supporting what error occurred and made findings of fact that the city attorney and staff will prepare in written form as support for these ordinances.

The final Ordinance adopted was Ordinance 1104 that allows for an amendment of the Unified Development Code (UDC) to provide that a sign program for a site in the City in excess of 20 acres will be given more flexibility with design, scale, and size of signs for such property due to the large size and uniqueness of the property. This will help with signage for the new Cambridge Market Place redevelopment.

With Old Business there were several matters that took some time to discuss and resolve. The first was the proposed contract with Chesapeake Waste Industries for private sanitation services/trash pickup for the city residents. After a presentation of the proposed contract and questions from the mayor and council, the contract was approved. The services will begin July 1<sup>st</sup>. large trash totes will be distributed to homes and apartments in the city. Trash pickup will remain twice a week. The city will need to change its current code regarding trash pickup given the move to privatization of services. As part of the transition to private services, two city employees will be offered jobs by Chesapeake Waste Industries, and the company has represented that the two employees will be hired at a competitive rate of pay to what they were receiving from the city. In addition city council approved additional compensation to both employees of \$2400 each and will review this matter at the July 10<sup>th</sup> meeting to ensure that they are being treated fairly by their new employer with regard to their salaries.



The Ordinance Committee had two matters regarding a propose committee and committee rules and procedures for committees that do not have their own rules and procedures. Dave Cannon and I led a discussion about the establishment of a city parks and waterfront committee and how it might be constructed and run. In addition there was a discussion about the rules for running the committee as well as other committees in the city that do not otherwise have meeting and procedural rules. The reason for this proposal came from my experience as liaison for the Long Wharf Committee that had too many members fail to attend meetings and the complexity of removing them from the committee.

As a result of the discussion, a number of things were agreed upon; and Commissioner Cannon and I will be developing a clarifying document regarding the parks and waterfront committee that will be brought back to City Council for further discussion and, hopefully, approval. In addition we will work on finalizing a set of standard committee rules for those committees that otherwise have not developed their own rules. The City Attorney would then use these as work documents for preparation of the ordinance establishing the committee and also a resolution regarding the general committee rules for committees that do not otherwise have rules.

Under New Business, City Council approved staff submitting a Technical Assistance Grant Application to the Maryland DHCD for \$25,000 and for appropriating \$25,000 available from 2017 Appropriated City Reserves to the City Manager's Budget for matching funds to hire a consultant to assist in this effort. These monies will assist the city in developing a Pine Street Revitalization Plan and Specific Project Plan while also helping to the city identify ways to address other areas of the city that also need assistance with deteriorating housing stock.

The final docket item for Council action was a report and recommendations from the Traffic and Safety Committee on the following that were adopted by council:

- The installation of 5 street lights between Leonard Lane and Cattail Crossing on MD Route 343 for pedestrian safety.
- Creating a four-way stop at the intersection of Peachblossum and Shephard Ave. that are consistent with other intersections on Peachblossum.
- The installation of 2 street lights on Goodwill Ave. between Washington Street and Boundary Ave for pedestrian safety.
- The installation of a 20 minute parking space restriction in front of the brick building on the southeast corner of Maryland Ave and Hayward Street and center lane pedestrian crosswalk signs on Maryland Ave.; relocating existing pedestrian crosswalk signs for more traffic and pedestrian visibility; painting the curbs yellow at this intersection and installing stop signs on Hayward Street for vehicle and pedestrian safety.

With regard to the last item on the list, I sought to have the committee consider some form of electronic pedestrian and vehicle traffic control at the Maryland Ave. and Hayward Street intersection given the speed at which traffic come in both direction and the significant width of Maryland Ave. there. This was not adopted, but the committee will meet to consider that possibility and report back to City Council.



This prompted the request from other commissioners, including myself, to have the committee look at the intersection of Washington Street and Maces Lane, which has challenges for vehicles crossing or turning on to Washington Street from Maces Lane. Another street that was discussed was Vue de Leau and the manner of parking on that street. When two vehicles are parked across the street from one another and are parked properly on the street and not on the sidewalks, it appears that no fire engine and possibly no ambulance can make it between those vehicles, which presents an issue of public safety to that part of the community. I raised concern about the automatic right turn from High Street onto Poplar Street and the intersection of Poplar, Race, and Gay Streets which are not pedestrian friendly. Other spots were noted by other Commissioners.

If there is an intersection or a place in the city that has vehicle or pedestrian problems, please let me know so that I can pass it on to the Traffic and Safety Committee for consideration.

The final item on the agenda was a report on the Sailwinds Wharf Reconstruction. Rather than give you a summary, it is attached.

An additional matter that was not on the City Council agenda may be of interest to some of you, so I am sharing it here.

The other day while walking our dog to Marina Park, I noticed a strange odor at Water and Mill Street. Because of the direction of the wind, I thought that it came from elsewhere in the city. It turns out that I was mistaken.

A neighbor raised the issue with me as well and indicated that the cause was related to the growth of algae near the river. Upon inquiry to Odie Wheeler at DPW, he provided the following explanation and how the city addresses the issue:

*Unfortunately the odor... comes when seaweed that accumulates in the corner of the bulkhead next to Yacht Club Drive close to Water St. ... we have been checking the tide pretty much every day to see if it's low enough that we can try and clean it. When the seaweed accumulates in the corner one would think that it would go and come with the tides, however once it makes it to the corner it just stays there, and when the weather reaches the high temperatures like we have experience the past several days, it begins to decay and puts off the odor. The only way we can clean the seaweed is when the tide is extremely low to where the bottom in that corner is exposed, and we can take our vacor truck down there and suck out the seaweed. Otherwise if we try to do it while there's still water in the corner, due to the way our truck works, we get a large percentage of water, and very little to no seaweed. ... we will continue to check the water level in hopes that we can assist, I have also asked Scott to keep an eye on the tide, and if it gets low enough he will contact us.*

Thanks for reading. Let me know how we can make Cambridge and even better place to live.

Steve Rideout