CAMBRIDGE MATTERS #25

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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It is hard to believe that the year has passed so quickly. It seems that the older I get the faster time passes. I have finished just over ¾ of my term of office as a City Commissioner with a little over a year left to go. It is and has been an interesting, challenging, rewarding, and for the most part an enjoyable opportunity to serve the City of Cambridge and all its residents. I have met and helped, I think, any number of people that had a question or complaint about how the city works. During the fall of 2020, the voters will be choosing new leadership for the City. As I let everyone know soon after my election in July 2016, this will be my one and only term of office. It will be up to those of you who live here in Cambridge to find and support candidates for office who will help continue the progress that we have seen.

What has been accomplished so far, and I believe will be accomplished in the coming year, is significant. New development; more job opportunities; fixing of deteriorating properties; improved Code Enforcement; New and Improved Guidelines for the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and a talented and committed staff member, Herve Hamon; better pay for our police force; new businesses; a collaboration with Habitat Choptank, and the list goes on. We have seen the skillful and committed staff of the City do great work on our behalf. We have seen our residents step forward to volunteer on Commissions, Committees, Nonprofit Organizations, and in our Faith Community that help make this a better place to live.

But the job is not done and never will be done as there is more that can improve the quality of life of all of our residents and especially the children in our community that need summer jobs, more safe places to play and hang out, and an improved learning environment so that they can have the opportunities to succeed in life in a very new and different world.

With no city council meeting this week, I wanted to send along some updates on matters that I had on my list of things to be done. The first is about leaf pick up. While most leaves have fallen at this point, if you are still working on cleaning them up and getting them ready for pick up by the city vacuum machine, the best way to have that done is to call DPW and let them know that you have put the leaves at or near your curb and provide them with your address. Also, of course, be sure that your car or a neighbor’s car is not parked near them so that the pickup vehicle can get close enough to do its work. If you are on a street that has lots of cars, maybe take the leaves near the corner where people should not be parking cars.

With the issue of city trash collection, the contract that the city has with Chesapeake Waste has some normal and obvious days where they will not collect. Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day, and July 4th are a few. The other days that are not on the city calendar where no pick-up will take place are the days when the county land fill is closed. Those are normally other federal holidays. An easy way to remember if there will be a collection on or around a Holiday is to expect that there will only be one collection in any week where there is a Holiday scheduled.

Development that is happening at Cambridge Marketplace can be seen with the building of the Chik-fil-A restaurant and the Good Will Retail store that are well along to being completed. Announcements of other good news in the development arena should be made public soon.

The City has received state funding grants that are very encouraging and focus on areas of improvement that have been ongoing. A recent report provides the following information:

$510,000 for the Canary Park next to the Phillips Building F

$ 25,000 for the Community Legacy Grant for Harriet Tubman Mural Viewing Area

$200,000 for the Strategic Demolition Fund for the Maces Lane School Center

$400,000 for the Strategic Demolition Fund for CWDI Property Acquisition at Sailwinds

$380,000 for Strategic Demolition Fund for Rent-to-Buy Program

Total       $1,515,000

The ongoing work on the Hearn Building on Race Street should make it ready for final development in the Spring.

The City’s grant application was sent to the federal government to fund the removal of lead paint, asbestos, and other harmful elements in the old city hall. If awarded, it will give the city the opportunity to bring this gem back into full use in downtown Cambridge.

The Flood Water Mitigation grant application has been sent to the state for review and consideration for recommending to FEMA. It has the support of a growing number of nonprofit groups interested in the issues of flooding challenges here. Thanks for making this happen go to Larry White, a friend, resident, and volunteer, who has considerable expertise in this area of significant need in Cambridge.

After much searching, the City has a new Economic Development Director who has great experience and, I believe, will help us to become stronger and have a sounder economic base as we move into the future. We are still looking for a Housing Director to help address the housing challenges in the City.

Thanks for Reading.