**CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS**

**BOARD MEETINGS:**

Are held virtually or in person at the discretion of the CAN President

CAN Board Meetings are open to the public

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS:**

Are held virtually or in person at the discretion of the CAN President

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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**FEBRUARY 23, 2023**

**MINUTES**

**Executive Committee Members President:** Chuck McFadden (President), Roman Jesien (Vice President), Jane Weeks (Treasurer), and Tom Puglisi (Secretary); 4 of 4 members being present, a quorum of the Executive Committee was achieved.

**Executive Committee Members Absent:** NA

**Additional Board Members Present:** Andre Duerinckx, Mary Ellen Jesien, Rick Klepfer, Sharon Smith, Dave Thatcher, and Judd Vickers.

**Board Members Absent.** Susan Olsen and Brad Rice.

1. **Opening Comments.** CAN President Chuck McFadden convened the meeting at 6:30 pm at 200 Belvedere Avenue in Cambridge.
2. **Treasurer’s Report.** CAN Treasurer Jane Weeks reported that there is currently $3510.67 in CAN’s treasury. Our account does not earn interest.
3. **Secretary’s Report.**  CAN Secretary Tom Puglisi reported that CAN membership now numbers 467 individuals. Minutes from the Annual Business Meeting were approved unanimously.
4. **City Council Vacancies.** Chuck McFadden summarized the pending City Council vacancies created by the moves of Commissioners Malkus and Roche.The Council appears to be dragging the process out until both Commissioners are eligible for election in their new wards of residence.
5. **Civil Rights Voting History**. Chuck McFadden explained that until 1986, the City of Cambridge utilized an at-large election system that placed almost all Black voters in a single, bloated Ward and deprived them of representation. The outcome of a Voting Rights lawsuit (see note below) challenging election procedures in Cambridge and Dorchester County established the current format for Cambridge elections, approved by the Court and the US Department of Justice, as follows:
   1. At-large City Council elections are prohibited.
   2. Commissioners must reside in the Ward they represent.
   3. Commissioners must be elected by the voters of the Ward (not at-large).
   4. Voting populations in each Ward must be approximately equivalent.

Comparable requirements were established for Dorchester County elections and resulted in changes to the Maryland Constitution.

1. **Historical Freedom Shrine.** The Historical Freedom Shrine was commissioned to honor the individuals who brought the Voting Rights lawsuit referenced above. The Shrine is a 20-ton monument dedicated to ten brave men who brought about voter reform on the local and state level in Maryland. Because Cambridge refused to let it be placed on City property, it is located on private property at 7014 East New Market Elwood Road at Hurlock, Maryland.  The reform changed the voting system in Maryland in 1985. All of those present agreed that CAN should participate in the effort to move the monument onto a prominent City property. Chuck will lead this objective on behalf of CAN. See the website at <https://www.dorchesterhistory.com/freedom-shrine>.

1. **Group Homes.** Judd Vickers reported that concerns have been received about three group homes operating in Blackwater Cove. Under the Unified Development Code (UDC), groups homes of 8 or fewer (which may be protected by the Americans with Disability Act) are permitted with conditions, requiring an operator to apply to the City, and the Planning officer may then apply additional conditions pursuant to site factors. The UDC also states group home uses should not be concentrated. It does not appear the City maintains a comprehensive list of these uses. Planning staff are addressing issues concerning these three homes now, and this matter will be discussed at the next Planning Commission meeting. Judd will write a letter to the Planning Commission, and Chuck will arrange a meeting with Tom Carroll and Brandon Hesson about these issues on behalf of CAN. The Board discussed the need for legal guidance, and Judd will conduct attorney outreach to provide consultation on these and other issues. Blackwater Cove is also raising concerns about the new Dollar General building, potential safety issues, and the lack of a fence buffering the residents from the commercial development. Chuck indicated that CAN needs to get the message out to other HOAs about these issues.
2. **MILL STREET SCHOOL.** Judd Vickers reported that a zoning change that would permit entirely rental apartments in the redeveloped Mill Street School has undergone its First Reading at City Council and will be presented for its Second Reading at the March 13 City Council meeting, during which there will be an opportunity for Public Comment. Judd proposed that CAN advocate for retention of the current overlay that requires condominiums rather than apartments, and that the City Council consider the financial implications of apartments versus condominiums (which provide higher tax revenue). Judd and Rick Klepfer will circulate a statement to Board members for possible presentation at the Council meeting. There will be a meeting of concerned neighbors this coming Tuesday at 7 pm. Judd and Rick will take part and express the Board’s concern about the zoning text change. Use of the back portion of the Mill Street property is not being addressed at this time.
3. **YMCA.** Judd Vickers reported that the YMCA is apparently looking at property on Byrn Street in, or adjacent to, Cambridge Harbor as a possible new location. The current property, which the County donated to the YMCA, is now owned by the YMCA of the Chesapeake. Relocation of the YMCA could become a major concern for the neighborhood and the City. Rob Gill, the Executive Director of the YMCA of the Chesapeake, is willing to come to a CAN meeting to discuss a possible move.
4. **Next General Meeting.** Chuck McFadden proposed inviting YMCA Executive Director Rob Gill, Joy Staniforth (former WMCA Director), and CWDI Director Matt Leonard to speak at the next CAN meeting to be held at the Library on a date to be determined.
5. **Spring Projects.** CAN has been approached to participate in cleanup projects by ShoreRivers. Possible CAN-JAMs may be discussed in the future.
6. **Proposed City Structure.** See chart attached. The City Manager wants to expand staff and has also appointed a number of special project managers.
7. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 pm.

*NOTE:*

*In November 1983, the United States Department of Justice (the Department) received a citizen's complaint that the at-large system for electing members of the Commissioners of Dorchester County, Maryland violated the Voting Rights Act. The Department began an investigation of the County's election procedures in early 1984. In May 1984, during its investigation of the County's procedures, the United States received collateral information that the City of Cambridge, the county seat of Dorchester County, also used an at-large system for electing its commissioners. A Justice Department attorney conducted a field investigation of both the City's and the County's election practices during the period June 4 to June 9, 1984. He learned that the City would conduct the primary election for commissioners on June 12, 1984 and the general election four weeks later.*

*The United States filed this declaratory judgment action against the City in December 1984, after the Department had completed its investigation. It asked the district court to declare that the City's at-large system violated section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the federal Constitution. The Government also asked for an injunction preventing the City from conducting future elections under this system, an order requiring the defendants to devise a plan meeting the requirements of federal law, and for "such relief as the interests of justice may require."*

*The Government alleged in its complaint that the City adopted the at-large plan to dilute the voting strength of its black citizens in violation of the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act.3 It appears from the record that a 1914 city ordinance required racial segregation of neighborhoods. Each city block was designated "white," "black" or mixed.4 Even prior to 1914, and at least since 1882, the boundaries of the City's Second Ward encompassed all but one of the black blocks, and, as a result, black electoral participation was essentially confined to the Second Ward. Throughout this century until 1972, the City was governed by a five-member body elected from five single-member wards, of which four were predominantly white and one overwhelmingly black. According to the 1960 census, the predominantly black Second Ward had over ten times as many people as the virtually all-white Third Ward. In 1961, the City redistricted and equalized the population of the four white wards, but left untouched the Second Ward, its most over-populated ward. When it became clear in the late 1960's that a single-member district system satisfying constitutional requirements would mean two black wards, the Commissioners adopted the at-large system. Under this system, only one person from any one ward can serve as a Commissioner and, thus, while a person from the Second Ward serves as a Commissioner, the entire city selects that person.*

*The Government filed its December 1984 suit approximately six and five months after the primary and general elections, respectively. Settlement negotiations began in June 1985. At that time, a Department of Justice attorney advised the City that the Government was seeking a racially fair election plan and a special election implementing the plan.*

*Excerpted from 799 F.2d 137, UNITED STATES of America, Appellant, v. CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND; Commissioners of Cambridge, Maryland, Appellees. No. 86-3533. United States Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit.* Argued June 3, 1986.

Decided Sept. 2, 1986. [*https://m.openjurist.org/799/f2d/137/united-states-v-city-of-cambridge-maryland#fn3*](https://m.openjurist.org/799/f2d/137/united-states-v-city-of-cambridge-maryland#fn3)