
CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS**MEMBERS PUBLIC MEETING****February 11, 2024****MINUTES**

Board Members Present: Chuck McFadden (President), Roman Jesien (Vice President), Dave Thatcher (Treasurer), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), Andre Duerinckx, Mary Ellen Jesien, and Judd Vickers. Seven of eleven members being present, a quorum of the Board was achieved.

Board Members Absent: Brad Rice, Kim Miller, Sharon Smith, and Donna Towers.

- 1. Opening Comments.** CAN President Chuck McFadden convened the meeting at 6:31 pm at the Dorchester County Public Library basement meeting room at 303 Gay Street in Cambridge. The meeting was livestreamed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@whcpstudio4716> and FaceBook at <https://www.facebook.com/WHCPRadio/videos> and will be posted on these sites after the meeting.
- 2. County Charter Changes.** Chuck reminded everyone that the County Council will take comments on proposed Charter Changes on March 19. See CAN website at <https://cambridgecan.org/cambridge-matters-march-2024/>.
- 3. Shoreline Resilience.** Chuck called attention to today's *Cambridge Spy* article about the Cambridge Shoreline Resilience and Flood Mitigation Project. CAN has obtained permission from the *Spy* to distribute copies of the article via its email distribution list.
- 4. Commissioner Roche.** The speaker at the meeting was Ward 5 City Council Commissioner Brian Roche, who said that he was honored to have represented both Wards 1 and 5 during his time on the Council. Mr. Roche addressed a variety of issues during the meeting as follows.
 - **Belvedere Avenue Dock.** Mr. Roche indicated that the private dock at the end of Belvedere Avenue is within the domain of the Department of Natural Resources, and that he hopes the issue is resolved soon.
 - **Shoreline Resilience & Flood Mitigation.** The Shoreline Resilience and Flood Mitigation Projects will include a berm approximately 3.5' - 4.5' high (7' above Mean Sea Level) between the river and the shoreline. Existing private docks, the berm, and runoff from higher ground will face challenges that the recently-funded design study will need to address. The proposed Mill Street greenway may be able to address runoff to some extent, as will the use of pumps but this remains to be determined. We need to ensure that the same problems that happened in Ellicott City and New Orleans do not happen here. We also need to enhance natural drainage areas for flood control.
 - **Cambridge Harbor.** The City-County-State government arrangement to develop Cambridge Harbor should be preserved. The City has raised a number of issues that need to be worked out, but the project is closer to implementation than ever before. Cooperation between the City and Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI) is essential for successful

completion of Cambridge Harbor. CWDI's first priority has been to provide the items that the citizens of Cambridge wanted (i.e., an inviting river walk, ample green space, a public boat ramp, and mixed commercial-residential use). Concrete actions have been taken to bolster the maritime museum, attract a boutique hotel, and preserve the historic elm trees on the property, and \$15M contract has been received to support restoration of the presidential yacht. Commercial development has admittedly been a challenge, and that is why infrastructure support is needed to attract profitable development. A perceived lack of investment in the neighborhoods surrounding Cambridge Harbor and the existence too many absentee landlords and unregulated group homes in Cambridge adds to the challenge. Cambridge Harbor is a citizen/community-oriented development rather than one that is developer-oriented. For a community-oriented development with so much untaxed space, you have to provide the infrastructure to attract developers. A tiff would use the increase in tax revenue from the development of Cambridge Harbor to pay for infrastructure through bonds that would be issued to get the infrastructure money upfront. It would be good for the current tiff proposal to be evaluated by an objective outside expert.

- **YMCA.** The rationale for locating the YMCA within Cambridge Harbor is to attract people into the site on a regular basis and extend a welcome mat to City residents. However, the YMCA will have to attract investment in order to move or upgrade its facility. CWDI had a world-class designer donate a plan for traditional housing on the YMCA's current property.
- **Cambridge Yacht Basin.** Grant proposal has been developed to address the problem of wave action and deteriorating piers at the existing marina.
- **Fishing Pier.** The fishing pier is a State facility owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) which doesn't have the money to do anything with it other than take the top off. The City Council doesn't have much influence on DNR's decisions on this. Building a new fishing pier would be cost prohibitive.
- **Land Bank.** All the Commissioners were elected on the issue of deteriorating housing, the lack of code enforcement, and the inability to attract investment in housing in the City's core neighborhoods. A Land Bank is a vehicle for the City to assemble blocks of properties for redevelopment, impose conditions on development and sale, and provide flexibility in obtaining such property. The Land Bank will be the most important factor in acquiring neglected housing and putting properties back into useful housing. After initial \$!M investment, the idea is that the Land Bank would be self-sustaining.
- **Sewage Overflow Project.** The Water Street and Hambrooks Avenue sewage overflow project will be starting this month. Seawater and rain water coming into the sewer system overload it and cause overflows. Repairs will be made to prevent excess water from coming into the sewer system and to keep pumps working throughout the system. The Maryland Department of the Environment, which was previously fining Cambridge, has an ability to promote funding for Cambridge now that Cambridge is fixing the problem. City recently approved an investment in a device to examine the existing pipes to identify problems.
- **Downtown Traffic.** Downtown streets have previously been determined to be unsafe. The recent downtown traffic study cost \$10,000, which was budgeted from ARPA funds. The total project will cost \$70,000. Slowing cars down in downtown is essential to sustaining the downtown area. We need to make the downtown more livable and improve pedestrian safety. Research supports the approach being used to replace certain traffic lights with stop signs. Standard is to leave traffic lights blinking is 30 days before removing them.

Commissioner Roche wants to be known as the guy who grew up here and wants to make Cambridge the most livable, environmentally friendly place it can be – with good housing, a vibrant river, a maximized quality of life.

5. Street Trees – Jennifer DeCaro announced that ShoreRivers has received grant to plan street trees in Cambridge. Free trees will be available to residents. Flyers describing the program were distributed at the meeting and through the CAN email distribution list.

6. City Elections will be held this year on October 29 for the positions of Mayor and all 5 City Commissioners.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.