



WEST END NEWS

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Winter 2003

***** SPECIAL EDITION FOR ALL WEST END RESIDENTS *****

Is Cambridge for sale?

Or, sold down the river?

Long Wharf for \$1.00 a year...free land for Deep Harbour...boat slips given away ...it seems our City may already have been sold to developers. They seem to be descending on us in droves. Cambridge has been discovered, and suddenly we are facing critical decisions about planning, zoning, growth and development, as well as procedures for public information and input — issues that many other communities on the Shore have lately been struggling with. Because many of the issues currently before us directly affect the West End, WECA is departing from our usual format to bring you this special important and informative edition of the WECA News. The topics covered here concern us all and demand our informed action to ensure considered and responsible decision-making and actions by our elected and appointed City officials.

As the only citizens' organization in the City, WECA is concerned with the lack of venue which encourages public input and the changing of City zoning ordinances to accommodate developers. The City should have an overall development plan in place rather than responding to the whim of an individual developer. Decisions are being made to give away public assets that are important to the tourism revenue that we are working so closely with the State to develop, and at a time when Cambridge is on the cusp of realizing our goal of becoming a major tourist destination.

Cambridge's development process seems to be developer-driven instead of community-driven. City planners should be developing a master plan for the use of our waterfront that will benefit the entire community, taking into account the goals

of heritage tourism, downtown revitalization, and the arts & entertainment district which rely on our uniqueness, history, architecture, and natural beauty for success. We need to protect these assets, not destroy them with short-sighted actions that we will have to live with forever.

Long Wharf "Village"

Marine Refueling Station or development of Long Wharf?

The subject of a new marine refueling station was first brought to the attention of the City several months ago. The refueling station on Academy Street has been purchased with plans to close it down permanently to make room for new condominiums. The City issued an RFP (Request for Proposal) which included other amenities in addition to the fuel station, in order to entice more interest from developers. Sadly, the request for proposal was responded to by only one developer, Long Wharf LLC. (This group is also leading the Deep Harbor project in East Cambridge). Their professionally presented proposal included a marine refueling station, lodging, ships' store, and café / restaurant. The proposed development would encompass the entire east side of Long Wharf.

Long Wharf presently exists within the Historic District as City-owned open space. Significant concerns about this proposal were voiced by citizens at the January 8th Refueling Station Committee meeting. These concerns included the probable loss of the tranquility and beauty of the openness of Long Wharf, in exchange for a huge commercial build-



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Zoning Code vs Developer

Which will Prevail?

On August 27, 2002 Cambridge Point, LLC requested a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA) to allow 19 additional condominium units for a proposed development at "The Point"; an area which is presently zoned for 47 condominium units and lies within the Planned Waterfront Community District (PWCD).

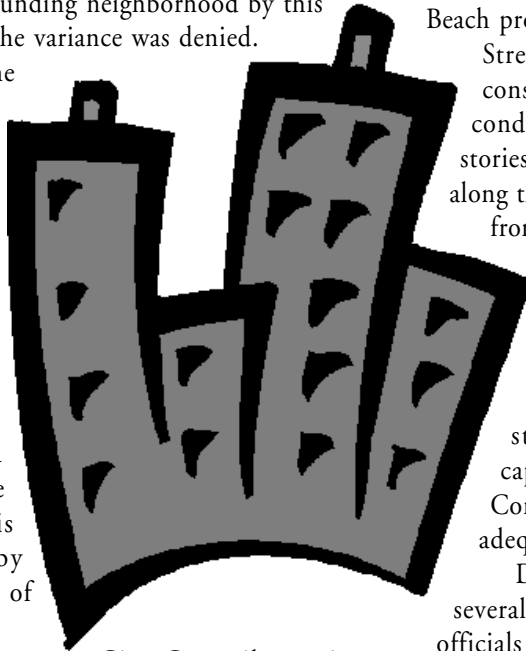
The BoZA Commission listened earnestly to the audience voice their views and concerns. The Commission realized the negative impact to the surrounding neighborhood by this potential development and the variance was denied.

Does this mean that the developer accepts the decision and redesigns the project within the existing code? Not in Cambridge.

In October, Cambridge Point, LLC executed a preliminary submission to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a proposed 56 unit condominium development. Again, a quantity greater than code will allow. How could this possibly work? Well, by changing the zoning code, of course!

Commissioner Atkinson at a City Council meeting made a motion to change the density requirements within the PWCD from the existing 20 units/acre to 24 units/acre. The motion failed for lack of a second. Ever persistent, at a subsequent meeting, Commissioner Atkinson made a motion that a Public Hearing be held on a proposed text amendment to change the density requirements within the PWCD; all City Council members were in agreement. The Public Hearing is scheduled for February 10, 2003 to consider the density change as well as address other issues within the PWCD.

The PWCD plan limits the total residential units to 800. There are several other properties located within the PWCD that are available or may become available for development. By enacting a text amendment to allow a greater density (24 units/acre) the options for future development of other properties along the Creek would be reduced. The original design of the PWCD plan was to encourage mixed development along our finite waterfront to encourage public access and a venue that would attract tourists on land and water to the City's most valuable asset — the Cambridge Creek.



Oakley Beach Update

The City Council has voted 5-0 for final approval of the Oakley Beach development, following the recommendation of the Planning & Zoning Commission. The WECA Board of Directors is in full support of Edgar Williams, who has filed an appeal to this ruling with the Board of Zoning Appeals and with the Circuit Court. The appeals are based on our belief that the project, had it been properly reviewed, would not have been approved because it does not comply with the City of Cambridge subdivision regulations.

For those of you unfamiliar with this issue, the Oakley Beach property, the large waterfront lot at the foot of Oakley Street, was purchased by a developer who intends to construct six houses and 24 condominiums on it. The condominiums consist of 6-unit 'pods' which are three stories high. Three connected 'pods' totalling 18 units front along the waterfront, with another 6-unit freestanding 'pod' fronting on Oakley Street. The massiveness of the main condo building will be about four to eight times greater than any of the neighboring structures and the density of housing would be twice that of the surrounding blocks.

A number of other issues were also raised — traffic, street parking, storm water management, sewer capacity, safety, and compliance with the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan — which in our opinion were not adequately addressed.

During the process of obtaining building approval, several irregularities in the process and activities by City officials created the appearance that this project was being "railroaded through" without regard for public input or recognition of the negative impact such a project would have on the West End.

These issues will hopefully be resolved in the appeal process.

WECA Receives Grant from Preservation Maryland

The West End Citizens Association has received a Special Grant from Preservation Maryland "to assist with the costs of legal fees in connection with efforts to ensure compatible development of a waterfront property called Oakley Beach located in Cambridge's historic district."

WECA has joined with neighboring property owner, Edgar Williams, in opposing the Oakley Beach development as currently proposed. (See article above.)

WECA gratefully acknowledges the Preservation Maryland Special Grant Fund as a sponsor of this project.

Who Benefits by Flood Plain Amendment?

At the City Council meeting on Monday May 20, 2002 an agenda item under New Business was listed as "Amendment of Flood Plain Requirements (eliminate 100-foot setback)". Ordinance #777 enacted January 1992 provided for a 100-foot flood protection setback within a Flood Plain.

According to a City official, this amendment of the 100-foot setback regulation was considered due to a request by Deep Harbor to allow the developer to cut into the shore 30 feet for additional boat slips. Cambridge waterfront has been discovered by developers; who else will benefit by this amendment in the future? Were all the potential ramifications given consideration? This amendment affects all Flood Plain areas within the City of Cambridge. (*Interestingly, there are at least two other developments in the works now which could not be built as proposed if the 100-foot flood plain setback requirement had not been eliminated.*)

The City does not consider this issue a zoning matter; therefore, the only requirement to enact the amendment: 2 public readings and a vote by City Council. "Public Notices" and "Public Hearings" are not required for non-zoning ordinances. Since the Flood Plain appears on the City's Zoning Maps and affects future zoning issues, shouldn't Ordinance #777 have been considered a zoning ordinance and given the required public notice and hearing?

The "first reading" occurred on May 20, the "second reading" was scheduled for June 3. WECA members formed a work group to research this issue at all necessary Federal and State levels. After numerous phone calls, a contact was reached on June 3 with the Maryland Department of the Environment. John Joyce, manager of Community Assistance with much Flood Plain experience throughout the State, claimed, "the 100-foot setback is the State's suggested minimum and designed to be consistent with Critical Area requirements". The State in this type of issue also acts as a regulatory contractor for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Hence, the State *must* be notified prior to a repeal or amendment of this ordinance. *The City had neglected to contact the State regarding the proposed amendment of Ordinance #777.* Following our June 3 discussion with John Joyce, the State initiated a contact with Jim Michael at the Department of Public Works (DPW) to verify the facts before the vote. Was it not the task of DPW to see that all necessary parties had been involved in the decision to amend?

At the City Council that evening a vote was recorded in favor of the amendment; however, WECA was instrumental in ensuring that proper procedure was followed with regard to State and Federal requirements.

IMPORTANT DATES

What: Public Hearing —

- **Text Amendment to increase density in PWCD** from 20 units per acre to 24 units per acre

Where: City Council Chambers

When: Monday, February 10, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

What: Public Hearing —

- **Comprehensive Re-Zoning for City of Cambridge**

Where: City Council Chambers

When: Wednesday, February 19, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

What: Board of Zoning Appeals —

- **Appeal of City's approval of Oakley Beach Condominium Development**

Where: City Council Chambers

When: Tuesday, February 25, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

New Cambridge Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

The Planning and Zoning Board has completed their review and revision of the draft Ordinance prepared by a consultant and has presented it to the City Council for final approval. The Council must hold public hearings on the new ordinance before it is adopted.

WECA has reviewed the second draft and presented about a dozen recommendations for amendments to the Planning and Zoning Board in November. Basically, most of our proposals were dismissed as being insignificant, only one being voted on by the board (it was voted down). We will revisit these issues with City Council at the public hearing.

One issue in particular deserves a full-court press by the residents of the West End. The original draft of the ordinance by the consultants, Redmond & Johnston, contained provisions for the gradual elimination (sunsetting) of multiple dwellings converted from single family homes. These provisions were carefully crafted to allow landlords to recoup investments and avoid financial hardship, while ultimately resulting in reconversion back to single family homes. At the earlier public hearings, this section was strongly supported by most commenters, with a few dissents from individuals who owned and operated

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Help Strengthen *Your* Neighborhood Organization

Become an active member of WECA today!

Why join WECA?

- ◆ WECA works for you! WECA is your neighborhood organization and needs your support and participation.
- ◆ WECA's goals are your goals. As a resident, business owner/operator, or property owner in the West End, you want a safe, clean, well-maintained neighborhood to protect your investment and preserve your quality of life. WECA helps achieve those goals, by encouraging and promoting home ownership, supporting our historic district and upholding its guidelines, working with the City to encourage enforcement of building and maintenance codes as well as working for consistent application of zoning regulations and compliance with the Cambridge Comprehensive Plan.
- ◆ WECA keeps you informed. Through our newsletter, publicity, public meetings and forums, and via e-mail and our web site, WECA alerts you about matters that affect our community so you can make informed decisions.
- ◆ There's strength in numbers. The more members, the stronger our voice. Help send the message to our elected officials that they need to listen to their constituents!

Neighborhood Update

WECA has been working with the City's Department of Housing helping to identify 'problem properties' in the West End. Unfortunately many of these properties are not owner-occupied and it is often very difficult to obtain the cleanup and repairs necessary to bring these properties up to in keeping with the adjacent neighborhood.

The Department of Public Works under its director, David Pritchett, is working diligently to keep Cambridge looking its best. However, it is a large area to cover and their time and resources are limited. You can help by looking around your immediate area for those properties which are not in keeping with your neighborhood.

Let us know of the problems and the address by calling 410-228-6294. You do NOT need to leave your name. We will check out the problem property, take a digital picture and, concentrating on the worst first, WECA will work with the City to be more effective in bringing these properties up to your neighborhood standards.

*A copy of the current financial statement of the West End Citizens Association, Inc. is available by writing to:
WECA, P. O. Box 13, Cambridge, MD 21613-0013 or by e-mailing your request to weca@cambridgemd.org.
Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, 1-410-974-5534.*

WECA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Join now and we will extend your membership through March 2004. That's 2 extra months free!

YES! I (we) would like to help protect and enhance the quality of life in the West End of Cambridge by joining the West End Citizens Association.

Tax-deductible membership fee: z \$6.00 for individual z \$12.00 for household

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Mail payment to WECA, P. O. Box 13, Cambridge, MD 21613-0013

New Cambridge Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

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a number of these conversions. The provisions were viewed as a giant step toward reversing deterioration of many Cambridge neighborhoods, restoring property values to homeowners, and encouraging new home ownership.

Somehow, these sunset provisions disappeared during the rewrite of the current draft. The Planning and Zoning Board declined to explain their rationale for removing this provision from the current draft. The current Comprehensive Plan for the City of Cambridge states in at least four separate sections that zoning ordinance modifications should be made to assure that the practice of subdividing existing housing units should be stopped and reversed.

Restoration of this sunset requirement to the new zoning code is a critical issue which will have significant and long lasting impact on the entire city. **We strongly urge all WECA members to attend the public hearings Wednesday, February 19 at 7:00 p.m. at the City Council chambers.** We cannot let a handful of landlords dictate laws that will determine whether many areas of the city will continue to decline into crowded, unkempt neighborhoods or will begin reversion into the solid single family neighborhoods they once were. Show up! Be heard! Let your city commissioners know that you expect them to act with courage and vision for the future of Cambridge.

Long Wharf Village

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ing. There would definitely be decreased access to the public, with the loss of a great fishing area and access to the breathtaking views of the Choptank River.

The meeting lasted almost two hours with a continuous flow of ideas and exchange of information about the negative effects of the proposed Long Wharf project and the consideration of other possibilities for this new refueling station. The future plans for expansion of the City marina would cause a major parking shortage and increased traffic to the area if the Long Wharf project was allowed to be built as stated above. Many were also concerned about losing public access to the water for annual parades, boating competitions and other popular city events. As far as the immediate need for marine fuel, the general consensus was that the City should explore the option of building a marine refueling station within the proposed municipal yacht basin expansion. The existing Gateway Marina & the forthcoming Hyatt (opening April 1) refueling stations would accommodate all but a few larger sail-

boats (due to height restrictions of the bridge). Other ideas discussed that night included putting retail space, like the one proposed by Long Wharf LLC, on the site of the current County office building with full public access to the stores and waterfront. The county office building site is better situated to expand open access to the Creek while generating more visitor traffic to our reviving downtown district.

Overall there was a consensus by all in attendance that the Cambridge Creek is very valuable to both developers and the citizens of Cambridge. It was proposed that a comprehensive plan for the entire Creek be designed before much else is built. The most exciting part of the evening was the number of people with positive ideas. Cambridge has incredible potential to be so much more, and hopefully the upcoming changes can be molded in a positive way to benefit all.

At the next Committee meeting, on January 22, the Committee voted 5 to 2 against allowing a temporary refueling station to be put at Long Wharf. Ben Parks said it best, that he could not vote in favor of something that he felt 95% of the public did not want. It was suggested that the money that would be spent on a "temporary" refueling station would be better spent on the Marina expansion or finding a more suitable long term location. The Sailwinds location was brought up again as an alternate site. Although the Mayor and City Council have written to the state to request that Sailwinds be returned to the City so this might be accomplished, it could be as much as a year or more to get the permission to put the facility at Sailwinds. There was strong support for a fueling station at the expanded City Marina, where the pumps could be manned by the Dock Master. Boaters would ask for a slip assignment, do the necessary paperwork, pay their docking fee, refuel and then dock. If boaters had to depend on the Hyatt, there could be a potential loss to downtown businesses, since the municipal dock is in walking distance while the Hyatt is not.

The Committee's recommendation was presented to City Council on January 27. No decision was made at that meeting. The question now is, "Will the City Council take the Refueling Committee's recommendation, or is this really about developing Long Wharf and not just where to put a marine refueling station?"

Main Entry: **de•moc•ra•cy**

1 a : government by the people; *especially* : rule of the majority **b :** a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections



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Notice of Annual Meeting

The West End Citizens Association will hold its Annual Membership Meeting and Election of Directors on Tuesday, April 15, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. in the Dorchester Public Library Meeting Room.

Be Informed! Receive WECA E-Mail Alerts

You do not have to be a WECA member to receive these timely and informative notices. Just send your name and E-Mail address to weca@cambridgemd.org

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- Dorchester County Courthouse (doors)
- Cambridge City Council Chambers (doors)
- The Cator House (second floor interior woodwork)

“AN HISTORICALLY CORRECT METHOD OF RESTORATION”