

Homelessness in Harvard Square: Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration in Action

In the summer of 2012, Ayala Livny, Program Manager for Youth on Fire (a drop-in center for homeless and street-involved youth in Harvard Square) came together with several others in Harvard Square to form the Harvard Square Homeless Coalition. Some of them, like Livny, represented nonprofit organizations that serve the homeless. Others represented Harvard Square churches that work with homeless people. A recent meeting convened by the Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA) had helped to catalyze this coalition: concern among Harvard Square business owners about aggressive panhandling, increased shoplifting and the absence of public bathrooms had reached a crescendo. It was clear that Harvard Square service providers needed a shared platform for discussion, exchange and collective action. Christ Church Cambridge, the 247-year old Episcopal church that was once saved from decay by George and Martha Washington, hosted the first meeting of the Harvard Square Homeless Coalition. Ayala Livny stepped forward to be the informal leader of the coalition.

Harvard Square's "Latrine Ministry" Closes Its Bathroom Doors

Harvard Square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a cultural, academic and commercial center that takes pride in its inclusiveness and diversity. Each year, over 8 million people visit Harvard Square.¹ In the 1970s, anti-war protesters found support and solidarity in Cambridge, and camped out over an extended period of time on the Cambridge Common. The then pastor of Christ Church Cambridge (across the street from Cambridge Common), reflecting the wishes of his liberal congregation, opened the church bathrooms to these protesters and began what affectionately became known as "the latrine ministry." Even after the departure of anti-war protesters from Cambridge Common, Christ Church continued its posture of openness to people living on the streets. Over the years, the configuration of the bathrooms changed from a series of stalls to lockable bathrooms.

In May 2012, Reverend Joe Robinson, Pastor of Christ Church, faced a dilemma. He had been at Christ Church for the past seven years and the church had intermittently faced difficulties with misuse of its bathrooms. This year, however, the situation had become dangerous. Heroin was cheap and plentiful on the streets, and the lockable bathrooms were being used to prepare and inject drugs. "We were dealing with overdoses every month – sometimes an overdose every week," said Robinson.² Cambridge Police Commissioner Robert Haas had requested a meeting with Reverend Robinson to discuss his concern that the Christ Church bathrooms were becoming a hotspot for drug overdoses. Most recently, the Cambridge Police Department had responded to four overdoses at

¹ <http://www.harvardsquare.com/about.aspx>, (accessed July 4, 2013).

² Reverend Joe Robinson. Interview with author. Cambridge, MA, October 17, 2012.

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Christ Church in the span of one month. Haas urged Reverend Robinson to close the bathrooms to the public. Concerned that the church was unwittingly providing a place to facilitate destructive behavior that could lead to fatalities and worried about the safety of the preschool that the church housed, Robinson decided to do so.

After the closure of the Christ Church bathrooms to the public, homeless people in Harvard Square were left with few options. The Cambridge Police Department began receiving complaints from business owners that alleyways and sidewalks adjacent to stores were being used for defecation overnight. Tension on the streets intensified, especially between chronically homeless individuals who were “regulars” in Harvard Square and “travelers” who hitchhiked or train-hopped across the country and stayed on Harvard Square streets for a few days or weeks at a time. Business owners perceived the chronically homeless as “our homeless” who were part of colorful, eclectic Harvard Square and had a stake in the welfare of the square; however, they saw the travelers as more aggressive, violent and rebellious.

The Cambridge Police Department had, over the years, developed effective strategies to engage with the chronically homeless and establish norms of behavior that would preserve a safe, comfortable atmosphere in Harvard Square. Dealing with travelers, however, was much more challenging. In general, travelers did not tend to respect authority and rejected the boundaries set by police. If arrested and charged, they would leave Cambridge and not appear in court. Many travelers had animals with them and fear of losing their animals (when asked to produce a license) was one of the only ways to secure their cooperation.

The Landscape of Homelessness in Harvard Square

Homelessness in the United States has been a persistent challenge exacerbated in a recessionary environment. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, some two million people in the United States were homeless at some point in 2009. A small proportion of these people were “chronically homeless” (defined by the federal government as being continuously homeless for one year or more, or experiencing at least four episodes of homelessness in three years). On any given day, about 112,000 people fit the definition of being chronically homeless.³ The rise in homelessness in the United States is driven by two major trends: the growing shortage of affordable rental housing and the increase in poverty.⁴

The situation in Cambridge, Massachusetts mirrors this landscape, with Central Square and Harvard Square being the main centers where homeless individuals congregate. The 2013 Cambridge Homeless Census⁵ counted 537 people experiencing homelessness. Over the years, Harvard Square (and “the pit,” the sunken area next to the *Out of Town News* stand and the entrance to the T station) has become a place where many homeless and street-involved people congregate. Their presence is seen as part of the landscape and texture of Harvard Square. Denise Jillson, Executive Director of the Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA), explained:

³ Dennis Culhane, “Five Myths About America’s Homeless,” *The Washington Post*, July 11, 2010.

⁴ National Coalition for the Homeless, “Why Are People Homeless,” July 2009.

⁵ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires communities across the country to conduct an annual census of individuals and families experiencing homelessness during the last ten days of January. The census includes a count of unsheltered individuals, and a count of sheltered and transitionally housed families and individuals.

Harvard Square should always be a place that welcomes everyone – from homeless people to global leaders. This is an authentic urban space comprised of mostly locally-owned, independent businesses. The consensus is there is room for everyone here. We never strive to rid the Square of homeless people. We do strive to help them.⁶

In fact, Massachusetts state law provides protection for panhandling as a First Amendment right, and declares the homeless a special needs group that cannot be held to the same rules as the general population because they are disadvantaged. For example, homeless people in Cambridge cannot be charged with loitering because, by definition, they have no home to return to.

There are several sub-groups of homeless in Harvard Square. Among them are:

- The chronically homeless, some of whom have been on the streets of Harvard Square for long periods and are well known to the police, business owners and service providers. Some of these individuals struggle with mental health challenges.
- Young people from Cambridge or surrounding towns who either live on the street or are involved with life on the street. These young people have left home for a variety of reasons: drug use, economic recession, domestic violence, intra-family conflict, or gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer lifestyles. Others have homes but spend considerable periods on the streets.
- Travelers who come to Harvard Square for relatively short periods of time. These young people move from city to city in a nomadic way (and connect with other travelers on social media), often train-hopping or hitchhiking in small groups, along with animals. A 2011 survey conducted by Youth on Fire indicated that travelers are more likely (than general homeless youth) to: be male, white, heterosexual and more educated; use more alcohol and drugs; engage in more high-risk sexual behavior; and report higher levels of sexually transmitted infections and Hepatitis C.⁷ Travelers tend to move around seasonally and Harvard Square has been a popular summer destination on the traveler circuit for years. Over the past five years, Harvard Square has attracted increasing numbers of travelers in the warm months. In 2011 and 2012, the travelers' aggressive behavior, open drug use and criminal activity caused intense concern – not only among residents, business owners, the police and service providers but also among other homeless people who were more rooted in Harvard Square.

A variety of actors engage with and served the homeless in Harvard Square: city agencies, nonprofit service providers, churches, ambulance services, and emergency room doctors, to name a few. Together they reflect the considerable resources of the City of Cambridge.

Cambridge Police Department

The *Cambridge Police Department* employs a community policing approach which seeks to proactively prevent and resolve law enforcement problems by working in partnership with various parts of the Cambridge community. When Robert Haas became Police Commissioner in 2007, the Cambridge Police took a traditional law enforcement

⁶ Denise Jilson. Interview with author. Cambridge, MA, October 30, 2012.

⁷ Traveler Survey Findings, Youth on Fire, undated.

approach to the homeless population. Haas reflected: “Typically, we would wait until there was a breach of the law and arrest them. Because many of them have severe mental or medical issues, we would wind up taking them to the hospital. They would end up in court, be released and be out on the street again. It was a vicious cycle.”⁸

Realizing that this approach was ineffective, Haas sought to connect with other government agencies and nonprofit service providers in order to understand and address homelessness in a more holistic and effective way. The *Homeless Outreach Program* was established in 2007 within the Community Relations Unit of the Cambridge Police Department. Officers Eric Helberg and Matt Price were assigned to the Homeless Outreach Program in recognition of their interest in working with the homeless population and their skill in relating to homeless individuals. This reflected the understanding that the police are often the first to interact with homeless individuals, and if they can build a respectful rapport, they are much better able to establish parameters for acceptable behavior as well as refer needed services. Since 2008, Officers Helberg and Price have had full-time assignments with the Homeless Outreach Program, and are widely known and respected by both the chronically homeless on Cambridge streets and the service providers working with the homeless.

A December 2012 column in *The Boston Globe*⁹ chronicled Officer Eric Helberg’s work – how he knew homeless individuals and their stories personally, and how he watched out for them and avoided unnecessary hospitalizations and arrests with his vigilance. The column also described how closely the Cambridge Police Department worked with social services and medical facilities. Helberg reflected: “Before we started [the Homeless Outreach Program], we were islands: EMTs, the shelters, the police. We all took care of the same people, but no one talked. Now we’re a network of community services.”¹⁰

The progressive and respectful stance of the Cambridge Police Department makes the city, and Harvard Square, in particular, a relatively hospitable place for homeless individuals, including travelers.

Nonprofit Service Providers

Of more than 150 registered nonprofits in Cambridge, a few focus solely on homelessness. Other nonprofits with a broader geographic focus include Cambridge in their scope.

Youth on Fire, led by Ayala Livny, is a prevention program of the AIDS Action Committee, serving homeless and street-involved youth in Harvard Square. It was established in 2000 following a survey of 100 youth showing that most of them were not connected to social services and did not want to be, and were at high risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Youth on Fire runs a daytime drop-in center that takes a harm reduction approach. That means they make no judgment about risk-taking behaviors, only trying to help youth be as safe as possible while engaging in those behaviors and building trust over time. Youth on Fire provides a range of services (hot meals, showers, laundry, computers), supports (mental health services, medical care, HIV/STI/hepatitis screening, housing search, referrals to other services), and opportunities (peer outreach program, youth advisory boards, speakers’ bureau, art and talent shows, community give-back days). It is one of the few Cambridge

⁸ Commissioner Robert Haas. Interview with author. Cambridge, MA, October 10, 2012.

⁹ Joan Wickersham, “The Homeless Beat,” *The Boston Globe*, December 14, 2012.

¹⁰ Quote drawn from Joan Wickersham, “The Homeless Beat,” *The Boston Globe*, December 14, 2012.

organizations that serve the travelers largely due to the fact that they provide safe, non-judgmental space that is animal friendly. Some 40 percent of travelers have dogs with them, and Youth on Fire has become known on the traveler circuit as a place that welcomes animals.

The Harvard Square Homeless Shelter has been continuously run by Harvard students for thirty years. It is open from November to April each year and, for seven weeks in the summer, the shelter (housed in the basement of the University Lutheran Church) is used for the St. James Shelter, also run by students. Harvard Square Homeless Shelter offers 20 men's beds and four women's beds, roughly proportional to the gender breakdown of the homeless population. Beds are assigned through a lottery; people must call in the morning to request beds. Since it is an emergency shelter, stays of more than two weeks are not permitted. Harvard Square Homeless Shelter is a dry shelter, meaning that people under the influence of drugs or alcohol are not permitted.

CASPAR, a nonprofit serving Cambridge and Somerville, provides an array of outreach, shelter, stabilization, aftercare and prevention services to individuals struggling with substance abuse. It runs one of only three "wet shelters" (accepting individuals with active substance abuse disorders) in Massachusetts. This shelter, located in Central Square, provides services to 107 people nightly. Homeless individuals using Harvard Square as a base can access the shelter using the subway (red line on the T). CASPAR's FirstStep street outreach program (on foot and in mobile vans) engages homeless people with substance abuse disorders where they are and tries to connect them with services.

Bread & Jams is a day shelter and drop-in center located near Harvard Square. It provides a range of services such as case management, referrals for health and substance abuse problems, support with legal problems that preclude homeless individuals from obtaining housing or employment, and food, clothing and hygiene supplies. In 2008, Bread & Jams merged with Eliot Community Human Services, a large nonprofit human services organization serving people throughout Massachusetts, becoming a component of Eliot's homeless outreach program.

Local Churches

Since 1982, Christ Church Cambridge has hosted the Harvard Square Churches Meals Program every Thursday. It typically serves approximately 100 meals an evening; volunteers from local churches, schools and neighborhoods serve guests restaurant-style, taking the meals to their tables. Being across the street from Cambridge Common, Christ Church welcomed anti-war protesters to use its bathrooms in the 1970s. These bathrooms remained open to the public until June 2012, when a string of overdoses in the lockable bathrooms precipitated their closure.

Since 1987, First Church Shelter has provided accommodation to 14 homeless men each night. The shelter must be accessed on a referral-only basis and does not accept walk-ins. Shelter staff also help guests to negotiate the process of applying for public benefits or subsidized housing.

Business Owners

For more than 100 years, the Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA) has convened and represented the business community in Harvard Square, and helped advance the commercial and public interests of the square. Of the more than 330 businesses in Harvard Square, 78 percent are locally owned or independent. Denise Jillson has

been Executive Director of HSBA since 2006 and is well networked not only within the Harvard Square business community but also more widely with the Cambridge Police Department, Harvard University and with nonprofit organizations and churches serving Harvard Square. Jillson serves as a node to which information relevant to the business community is transmitted and from which alerts are communicated. For example, relevant images and information from security cameras on the premises of HSBA members are shared with HSBA, and Jillson and her staff alert HSBA members to anything for which they need to be vigilant. Jillson was proactive in her engagement with the Cambridge Police and with nonprofit organizations on the issue of homelessness, especially the new challenges posed by a larger-than-usual influx of travelers in the summers of 2011 and 2012.

The Harvard Coop is a bookstore that has traditionally served Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Its Harvard Square location is one of the largest retail spaces in the square. The Harvard Coop's storefront, featuring a generous space that offers protection from the elements, is a popular area for homeless individuals to sleep or panhandle. The store also has bathrooms that are essentially open to the public. Jerry Murphy, President of The Harvard Coop, noted:

When there are people sitting in front of the store and asking for money, and particularly when they have animals like pit bulls with them, there is an intimidation factor that may discourage customers and visitors from going in. We have to make sure the front of our store and our bathrooms are clean and inviting for our customers and visitors.¹¹

Many other business owners engage with and are affected by homelessness in Harvard Square. For example, given its location adjacent to the Harvard Square T station and "the pit," *Au Bon Pain* is a café that has many homeless patrons. In addition, its ample outside seating is a draw for panhandling and its bathrooms are among a few in the square that can be used by homeless people. Given the number of aggressive young homeless people congregating and generating an atmosphere that visitors, residents and business owners find intimidating, the area outside *CVS*, *Bank of America*, *Otto Pizza* and *T-Mobile* (on Massachusetts Avenue near the intersection with Church Street) has come to be known as "the gauntlet." When the presence of travelers is at a peak, the "regular" homeless in Harvard Square steer clear of "the gauntlet," seeking to avoid confrontation with travelers.

City Agencies

The Department of Public Works builds and maintains much of the public infrastructure of the City of Cambridge. To the extent that the homeless population in Harvard Square utilizes public infrastructure or reveals the need for additional infrastructure, the Department of Public Works needs to be involved. The lack of accessible public bathrooms in Harvard Square (with the exception of a bathroom at the Harvard Square T station) has become a contentious issue among homeless individuals, service providers and business owners.

The Department of Human Services runs a range of programs for homeless individuals and families. The Multi-Service Center for the Homeless provides services to people living on the street, in transitional housing or at risk of losing their housing.

¹¹ Jerry Murphy. Interview with author. Cambridge, MA, October 17, 2012.

Platforms for Collaboration

Cambridge has no shortage of city agencies, medical professionals and nonprofit service providers serving the homeless. It also has a police department with a strong commitment to community policing led by a commissioner who places a premium on preventing the need for law enforcement solutions. In Harvard Square, business owners and residents view people living on the street as part of the diversity of the area. Harvard University students run a homeless shelter during the cold months and have street outreach teams that distribute food and blankets each night to homeless individuals on the street.

In 1999, after a study on homelessness conducted by the City of Cambridge, major actors engaging with the homeless came together to form the Senior Policy Group on Homelessness. This group became inactive over the years and was reactivated in 2007. Since then, the group has been convened by Claude Jacob, Chief Public Health Officer for Cambridge, and meets on a quarterly basis. Other members of the Senior Policy Group on Homelessness include the Assistant City Manager for Human Services, the Cambridge Police Commissioner and senior representatives of Healthcare for the Homeless, CASPAR, HomeStart, Professional Ambulance Services and the Emergency Department of Cambridge Hospital. The quarterly convening of this group – together with the preparatory and follow-up work done by staff – enables the sharing of information among key actors engaging with homelessness in Cambridge and provides a forum for planning collaborative approaches and activities, where possible.

While the Senior Policy Group on Homelessness offered an effective platform for collaboration and coordination at the city level, localities like Harvard Square were not organized in similar ways. When new challenges arose or existing challenges were exacerbated, mechanisms for coordinated decision making and action were not in place. The summer of 2011 saw travelers arriving in Harvard Square in greater-than-usual numbers. A strong drug culture was associated with their presence. Fights broke out between travelers and “regulars” in Harvard Square. In the summer of 2012, two other factors converged to further escalate the situation. First, the Cambridge Police response to a homicide in East Cambridge shifted police resources away from Harvard Square in the early part of the summer. Second, the closure of the public bathrooms at Christ Church left homeless individuals with no options to relieve themselves in the night.

This led to a situation where business owners found evidence of open defecation and urination in alleyways and outside storefronts when they opened for business in the mornings. Public consumption of drugs and alcohol was not uncommon, panhandling was turning aggressive, and incidents of shoplifting and break-ins were on the rise. HSBA had long been a platform for business owners to discuss issues related to the welfare and safety of Harvard Square and its inhabitants. The association’s meetings were regularly attended by senior representatives of the Cambridge Police Department, who consistently urged business owners: “if you see something, say something.” They explained that the police could do very little unless residents or business owners reported aggressive behavior that made them fearful or uncomfortable. Such reports give the police the impetus to arrive on the scene, investigate and address the situation. The police encouraged business owners and residents to dial 911 in an emergency, and dial 349-3000 if not an emergency but the presence of a police officer was necessary. As a result of the police department’s proactive engagement with HSBA, a matrix of current problems together with

the appropriate police response and community (business owners) response was developed to create a shared understanding of the situation.

As the situation escalated in Harvard Square, business owners began to get impatient about why the police were not acting more assertively. Although there was widespread appreciation of the work of Officers Eric Helberg and Matt Price (in homeless outreach), there was frustration that the City of Cambridge's welcoming and respectful posture toward homeless individuals – including travelers – was combined with a lack of public infrastructure (i.e. public bathrooms) to meet their basic needs. This frustration was captured by Reverend Joe Robinson of Christ Church, who received some criticism after the church's decision to close its bathrooms to the public after a series of drug overdoses occurred there:

This city has a very open policy toward people living in the streets and panhandling – much more open than Boston, which is why people gravitate here. The city doesn't see the connection between the policy of openness and the responsibility to provide basic services for people who come here. For example, all the conversations have been about private bathrooms being made available to the homeless. Why is the city depending on the private sector providing bathrooms for the public, especially when there is such an open policy toward people living on the street?

In a June 2012 community meeting convened by the HSBA – and attended by the Police Commissioner, Reverend Joe Robinson, Ayala Livny and others – the lack of public bathrooms in Harvard Square became a flashpoint for frustration and collaboration.

Organizing for a Place to Go

When leaders of nonprofit service providers like Youth on Fire and Bread & Jams met at the HSBA meeting, some of them didn't know each other – and, as a group, they had no forum in which to share information and lessons, to jointly consider issues that were obviously interconnected, or to plan for collective action. In June 2012, when these service providers met at the HSBA-convened meeting and took part in the discussion, securing a public bathroom that homeless people could use emerged as their top priority. They formed the Harvard Square Homeless Coalition¹² with one immediate goal in mind: to press the Department of Public Works for a portable toilet at Cambridge Common.

The organizing for a portable toilet proceeded swiftly under the leadership of Ayala Livny, who mobilized a diverse group of Cambridge stakeholders to email or write to Lisa Peterson, Commissioner of the city's Department of Public Works (DPW), each stating their distinctive case for a portable toilet. Parents who used the playground at Cambridge Common urged DPW to install a portable toilet so that their children could have easier access to a bathroom. Student groups who used the soccer fields at Cambridge Common mirrored that request. HSBA members and members of the congregations of Christ Church and First Church did the same. A member of Youth

¹² The Harvard Square Homeless Coalition includes: Youth on Fire, Bread & Jams, the Harvard Square Homeless Shelter and the First Church Shelter. Christ Church Cambridge is not formally a member but provides meeting space and convening support. Notes of coalition meetings are shared with the Cambridge Police Department.

on Fire wrote about how young homeless people often do not eat after 4 pm because the MBTA restrooms close at night. This organizing effort indicated both that the lack of public bathrooms affected a broad range of Cambridge stakeholders and that solving the problem was an urgent need.

The Harvard Square Homeless Coalition met with Lisa Peterson in September 2012 to discuss their request, and Peterson went away having committed to exploring what a feasible solution might be. A month later, a portable toilet was installed in the Cambridge Common. Charlie Hobbs of the Harvard Square Homeless Shelter recalls his surprise at the speed of DPW's response: "I thought this was supposed to be way harder... that we would have to really fight to get something done."¹³

After their rapid advocacy victory, the Harvard Square Homeless Coalition lost no time in pressing to keep the portable toilet open during the winter. The DPW's policy was generally to remove portable toilets during the winter. After another round of mobilizing letters and emails, the coalition was successful in securing the DPW's agreement to keep the portable toilet open throughout the winter. The DPW has service providers' support in maintaining the portable toilet clean and functional: CASPAR's FirstStep outreach team checks the toilet regularly and notifies the DPW when it needs cleaning or maintenance.

The Road Ahead

With a quick victory under their belt and recognizing the obvious value of a shared forum, members of the Harvard Square Homeless Coalition continued to meet regularly. Ayala Livny continued to provide leadership and coordination to the coalition, which met once a month (every third Wednesday of each month) and identified a topic to explore at each monthly meeting. Christ Church Cambridge became a regular meeting venue. While Christ Church was not part of the coalition itself, Reverend Robinson sought to support the coalition and help it cohere. The existence of the coalition also provided a convenient mechanism for the Cambridge Police Department and HSBA to engage with nonprofit service providers focused on homelessness in Harvard Square.

In June 2013, HSBA held its annual community meeting focused on keeping Harvard Square businesses, visitors and workers safe during the summer season. In addition to HSBA members, the meeting included several officers from the Cambridge Police Department and several service providers working in Harvard Square. Just one year since the HSBA meeting in which frustration about the lack of public bathrooms spilled over and concerns surrounding the travelers in Harvard Square reached a crescendo, the tone of the discussion was starkly different. Service providers who may not have known each other the previous year were now knit together in the Harvard Square Homeless Coalition. HSBA members and the Cambridge Police acknowledged that the summer of 2013 was, thus far, a slower season (in terms of the influx of travelers) than the summers of 2011 and 2012. However, given the collaborative relationships that had been built and strengthened, all these actors were better prepared and equipped to face new challenges.

The previous year, under Denise Jillson's leadership, HSBA had produced a brochure titled "Help for the Homeless" (see Exhibit 2) meant to provide information both to people in need of help and people wishing to help. This brochure briefly described the services and hours of six agencies/programs serving the homeless in Harvard

¹³ Charlie Hobbs. Interview with author. Cambridge, MA, October 11, 2012.

Square. In the course of the year, HSBA had also set up a series of tablets in various shops so visitors could donate instantly to these agencies/programs using a credit card. Youth on Fire had organized a series of Clean-Up Days for its members (homeless youth) to help clean up Harvard Square, and HSBA had supported this effort by buying pizza for the volunteers. Speaking at the June 2013 meeting, Ayala Livny asked if HSBA members would be willing to contribute toward a small stipend for peer leaders that could be trained by Youth on Fire to engage with travelers about the norms established by homeless young people who are in Harvard Square year-round. Livny introduced a Youth on Fire member, who had been living on the street in Harvard Square for a few years. He eloquently described the state of tension that existed between travelers and chronically homeless individuals in Harvard Square: “We have the same problems with travelers that you do. They don’t care if things get bad because they can leave. We local kids have some norms. We scold each other for tossing trash about or being public with illicit activities or getting overly aggressive.”¹⁴

The meeting was attended by several police officers, including Superintendent Steve Williams, Commander of the Patrol Operations Division, and Deputy Superintendent Steve Ahearn, who underscored how important the partnership of the business community had been in managing the situation in Harvard Square the previous year. Various officers – from those assigned the day shift and night shift in Harvard Square to the Director of Outreach and Community Programs to one of the department’s Crime Analysts – were introduced to HSBA members and service providers. Although Officers Helberg and Price have had much success in their outreach roles, several officers acknowledged that engaging with travelers remained challenging. Toward the end of the meeting, some frustration spilled over from police officers assigned to Harvard Square, who urged that Youth on Fire collaborate more closely with the Cambridge Police Department when travelers suspected of crimes are at the Youth on Fire day shelter. Livny explained: “We work really hard to get these young folks to trust us. If we are seen to be in cahoots with the police, that doesn’t help us. Our primary obligation is to our members.”¹⁵

In addition, in the aftermath of the marathon bombings in Boston in April 2013, some new security concerns arose among HSBA members. A representative of Trademark Tours, a business that offers tours of Harvard, MIT and other Boston-area landmarks, asked about security concerns surrounding unattended bags. Tour guides frequently see unattended backpacks but know that they belong to certain homeless individuals, and feel bad to report it to the police. What should tour guides do in these situations? While Trademark Tours was urged by the police to report it, Livny also offered to spread the word among young people on the street that they should not leave backpacks unattended.

Since June 2012, the Harvard Square Homeless Coalition’s mobilization for a portable toilet on Cambridge Common had grown into a fully-fledged campaign catalyzed by members of Christ Church to press the city to include a public bathroom in its planned \$4 million renovation of Cambridge Common. Advocates for a Common Toilet (or ACT) counted Youth on Fire, St. James Episcopal Church, HSBA, the Outdoor Church of Cambridge, Cambridge Youth Soccer, First Church and First Parish in Cambridge among its members (see Exhibit 3 and 4).

¹⁴ Drawn from remarks at the annual community meeting of the Harvard Square Business Association, June 12, 2013.

¹⁵ Ayala Livny. Interview with author. Cambridge, MA, June 4, 2013.

Despite a plethora of public agencies and nonprofit organizations serving the homeless, a police department committed to community policing, and an association of business owners supportive of the rights of homeless individuals, Harvard Square continues to face challenges in relation to both “regulars” and travelers on its streets. How should the City of Cambridge more effectively reconcile its openness to homeless people – and its growing reputation on social media as an attractive destination to travelers – with public infrastructure and services to meet their needs? How should the rights of business owners and residents (e.g. to create a welcoming climate for customers, to feel safe and comfortable in Harvard Square) be balanced with the rights of homeless people (e.g. to fulfill basic needs with dignity, to panhandle)? What will it take for mechanisms for joint problem solving and collective action to be sustained over time, as some problems are resolved and new challenges emerge? As collaboration between police and service providers increases in breadth and depth, how are the boundaries of collaboration negotiated to allow each party to serve its clients while working toward a shared goal? What new strategies could be developed to incentivize travelers to respect accepted norms for homeless individuals in Harvard Square?

Exhibit 1: Map of Harvard Square



- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Christ Church | 6. Au Bon Pain |
| 2. First Church | 7. Cambridge Common |
| 3. Youth on Fire | |
| 4. The Harvard Coop | |
| 5. Harvard Square T Station | |

Source: Courtesy of Scott Walker, Harvard Map Collection

Exhibit 2: HSBA brochure



Help	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Youth on Fire	11:00a-8:00p	1:00p-6:00p	11:00a-6:00p
Homeless Shelter *11/15-4/15	7:00p-8:00a	7:00p-8:00a	7:00p-8:00a
CASPAR	24/7	24/7	24/7
Bread & Jams	9:00a-2:00p	9:00a-2:00p	9:00a-2:00p

Help	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Youth on Fire	11:00a-6:00p	11:00a-6:00p		
Homeless Shelter	7:00p-8:00a	7:00p-8:00a	7:00p-9:00a	7:00p-8:00a
CASPAR	24/7	24/7	24/7	24/7
Bread & Jams	9:00a-2:00p	9:00a-2:00p		
Meals Program	6:00p			



The city of Cambridge provides shelter for dogs and cats through the Animal Commission.
344 Broadway St.
(617) 349 - 4376
For off-hour emergencies please call:
(617)-349-3300



H.S.B.A.
harvardsquare.com

18 Brattle St. Suite # 352
Cambridge, MA 02138
www.harvardsquare.com

The Harvard Square Business Association
Help for the Homeless



Harvard Square: A place where all are welcomed; from global leaders to homeless men and women, from runaway kids to those of privilege, there is space for everyone. It is in that spirit, that we print this booklet highlighting Harvard Square organizations ready to serve.

If you are in need of care, please reach out; someone is waiting for you.

If you wish to help, reach out as well; your efforts will be appreciated.

Source: Courtesy of the Harvard Square Business Association.

Exhibit 2, Continued

There are 6 agencies in the Harvard Square area that provide food, shelter, health services, employment and more for homeless individuals...



Youth on Fire
1555 Mass. Ave
617-661-2805

*Serves ages 14-24

YOF has onsite hot meals, clothing, showers, and laundry facilities, as well as weekly medical care, mental health counseling, referrals to community resources, internet access and harm reduction supplies. Animals are welcomed!

YOF hours:

Monday: 11am - 8pm

Tuesday: 1pm - 6pm

Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday: 11am- 6pm

Hot meals served between 2:30pm & 5:30pm

Harvard Square Meals Program

Christ Church, Zero Garden St
617-797-4444

Harvard-Epworth joins with other churches in the Harvard Square area to provide a weekly hot meal for over 110 needy people on **Thursdays** at Christ Church, Zero Garden Street where dinner is served at 6:00 pm.



The Harvard Square Homeless Shelter

66 Winthrop St.
617-547-2841

*For sober men and women

Call at 7:30am for a 14-night bed

Call at 9:30pm for a 1-night bed.

We are open from the evening of

November 15th to the morning of April

15th. The shelter is open from 7PM to 8AM, except on Saturday mornings when it is open until 9AM. To enter the bed lottery, please call 1.888.656.3414.



**HARVARD SQUARE
Homeless Shelter**

CASPAR

Emergency Services Center (ESC)
240 Albany St
617-661-0600

CASPAR operates many programs for individuals who are addicted to drugs or alcohol and may be homeless. Open **24 hours/365**, ESC provides unsheltered homeless persons whose medical or mental health status places them at higher risk with shelter, food, and services. FirstStep Community Outreach Team can help unsheltered individuals, Monday to Friday (8 a.m. to midnight), throughout the city. Other persons seeking daytime support for sobriety should access the Drop-In Center in Somerville.



Bread & Jams' Self Advocacy Center

50 Quincy St off Kirkland St.
617-441-3831

Weekdays 8am-4pm open to clients 9am-2pm

In the basement of the Swedenborg Chapel a "low-threshold" program providing a safe place off the street, offering food, clothing, phones, access to case management, help with housing search, job search, benefits enrollment, access to MH counseling (Eliot Community Human Services staff on-site Mon-Wed), medical triage (Healthcare for the Homeless every other Wed), and referrals to other services. At this time, there is no on-site access to showers or computers.



Spare Change

1151 Massachusetts Avenue
617- 497-1595

Spare Change News was founded in 1992 by a group of homeless individuals. Since its inception, the publication has striven to simultaneously elevate the voices of homeless and otherwise economically disadvantaged people in the Greater Boston area, and to provide an opportunity for low-threshold employment to people who find it difficult to obtain more conventional work due to myriad types of adversity. This newspaper offers employment opportunities to homeless of all ages.



Exhibit 3: ACT website (factsheet)

Cambridge ACT – Advocates for a Common Toilet

Fact Sheet- April 2013

Wouldn't it be nice to have a well-maintained public restroom on the Cambridge Common? ACT aims to mobilize community organizations around Harvard Square and beyond in a campaign to address this issue as a matter of civic pride. Cambridge is a world-class city lacking sufficient public restrooms!

WHERE:
The Cambridge Common



WHAT WE WANT: To convince the City of Cambridge authorities of the absolute necessity to build a restroom on Cambridge Common!

QUICK FACTS:

- 1) The City has conducted long studies on public toilets before, but has taken no permanent action.
- 2) The City is receptive to this issue: There is a temporary porta-potty located on the northeast corner of the Common.
- 3) In Fall 2012, a letter-writing campaign helped get the approval to extend the temporary porta-potty program.
- 4) There's urgency: City of Cambridge is embarking on a major renovation Common. Now is the time to make sure a public toilet gets planned, sited and built.
- 5) There's opportunity: city management is undergoing changes as City Manager Robert W. Healy is retiring.
- 6) And there are solutions! Cities around the world face this issue and have responded with creative designs and implementation.



WHAT: The lack of a public toilet



WHY: Currently, people must try their luck at neighboring businesses, MBTA-station or use the bushes!

ACTION WE'RE TAKING:

- 1) Gathering Community Voices and Rallying Constituents-- To demonstrate our cross-community involvement and desire, we will record stories and progress on our website. What do YOU say? Send us your testimony.
- 2) Compiling an "Info Kit"-- To be informed and spread the word.
- 3) Writing Letters and Signing Petitions-- To request change now.
- 4) Organizing Strategic Meetings-- To engage key city officials in fact-finding and momentum-building discussions.



WE ARE MEMBERS OF:

University Lutheran, Harvard-Epworth UMC, St. James' Episcopal, First Church CC, First Parish UU, The Outdoor Church of Cambridge, Christ Church Cambridge/CCC, Cambridge Youth Soccer... and counting!

WHO: A toilet would serve All-- parents & children, homeless, sports teams, students, and 8 million annual tourists.



JOIN US: We look forward to working with you! Contact us with questions and ideas. Help us strategize and implement our next steps! We believe this is possible.

LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN:

Web: www.cambridgeACT.com

Email: harvardtoilets@gmail.com

WHEN: ACT NOW!

Source: http://www.cambridgeact.com/uploads/9/3/1/4/9314770/fact_sheet.pdf

Exhibit 4: DPW letter re public bathroom



May 10, 2013

Lisa Peterson

Commissioner.

147 Hampshire Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-349-4800
TDD 617-449-9924

Cambridge ACT
Christ Church Cambridge
Zero Garden Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Mses. Fontana Shulman, Carey, Moran, Jillson and Livney, and Messrs. Parker, Kerzee and Tufts:

Thank you for your letter of April 12, 2013 regarding a public restroom facility on the Cambridge Common. I appreciate your interest in addressing this issue, and your recognition of the City's concern for this issue, and for its complexity. I was very pleased to hear, at our meeting on April 3rd, that the portable toilet on the Cambridge Common has provided good benefit.

I would like to address your specific requests:

- A working group has been meeting to discuss the issue of public toilets citywide, as requested by the City Council, including one serving the Cambridge Common. In addition to the Public Works Department, this working group involves high level involvement from the City Manager's Office, the Mayor's Office, Police Department, the Public Health Department, the Department of Human Service Programs, the Historical Commission, and the Community Development Department. The working group's progress to date includes research of other communities experiences with public toilets and lessons learned, understanding where public toilets are currently, and a good discussion of goals and strategies for identifying and understanding needs and effective solutions.
- We will be engaging the community further in the discussion in the near future. We would like to invite the members of Cambridge ACT to a working group meeting to discuss this issue and hear your concerns. I will be in touch about a mutually agreeable time in the near future.
- We are specifically looking at improved signage and information on the location of restrooms available to the public.
- We are also looking specifically at the Cambridge Common and immediate area to understand where the best location for a public toilet might be and understand the



Exhibit 4, continued

additional work that would be necessary if a toilet was installed. In addition to location of utilities, consideration needs to be given to visibility, lighting and proximity to activity.

As we discussed, our paramount concern in siting a public toilet is to ensure it is well maintained and safe. This will be a challenging issue for us to address as we move forward. However, we are committed to reaching workable solutions on this issue.

I appreciate Cambridge ACT's commitment to this issue and welcome additional questions, comments or ideas you may have.

Sincerely,



Lisa Peterson

CC: Richard Rossi, City Manager's Officer
Robert Hass, Police
Ellen Semonoff, DHSP
Elizabeth Mengers, DHSP
Claude Jacob, Public Health
Stuart Dash, Community Development
Elaine Thorne, Community Development
Charles Sullivan, Historical Commission
Matthew Nelson, Mayor's Office

Exhibit 4, continued

April 12, 2013

Lisa Peterson
Director of Public Works
147 Hampshire Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Ms. Peterson,

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with us last Wednesday about the Cambridge Common restroom. We all came away from the meeting impressed by your warmth and candor, by the City's concern for the issue—and for its complexity.

We also hope you learned from the conversation of our determination to work with you to resolve this issue in an open and expeditious way.

We appreciated your frankness that "the issue" is not cost or engineering but security—as well as your telling us that there have been no neighbors or abutters have complained in the seven months since the City placed a Porta-Potty on the north side of the Common, and that daily police patrols of the facility have reported no incidents.

We also appreciate that the City takes seriously the instructions of the City Council last December to begin an investigation of the issue of citywide needs for public restrooms, including on the Common.

Given the five months that have passed since that Council instruction, however, we regret that the City has yet to begin even preliminary hearings or appoint, let alone invite nominees, for citizen members to join City officials on the public committee that the Council has instructed should lead this investigation.

You're right, of course, that there's a need to investigate what other cities are doing about public bathrooms—something Advocates for a Common Toilet (ACT), our working group of concerned churches, civic groups, homeless groups, sports teams, parents of children who use the park, and numerous Harvard Square businesses—has already begun doing.

We're eager to share what we've learned in order to advance this process.

We also appreciate that determining exactly where to place such facilities is subject to discussion. But as Ayala Livney pointed out during the meeting, no one solution precludes another. The fact is that Harvard Square lacks public restrooms, despite the fact that City has on average eight million visitors a year.

Local businesses, as Denise Jillson of the Harvard Square Business Association remarked in the meeting, for years have recognized what a burden this is, and added that informally Harvard (in the Holyoke Center) and the Harvard Coop have kept facilities open. The Harvard Square T also has a public bathroom, but it is more often unavailable than not. None of these facilities, however, is marked in any way that indicates their whereabouts to a visitor in the Square.

Exhibit 4, continued

You obviously have a very busy schedule, and with your new job as Deputy City Manager, no doubt there are transition issues to take into account.

We would appreciate seeing the following:

- 1) **Committee appointed:** The City appoint the commission to investigate the bathroom issue, as instructed by the City Council last December; this includes not only convening the committee and beginning public hearings, but including on the committee citizens concerned about this issue;
- 2) **Signage created:** Creation of street signs—as well as brochures and online information—for the Harvard Square area that clearly shows where existing bathrooms are located;
- 3) **Sites for a facility identified and prepared:** Preliminary designation of sites on the Common where a facility (or facilities) could be sited, in terms of existing sewerage, water lines, electricity, etc. You told us that the \$4 million renovation of the Common does **not** include any plans for a restroom, and that at this point the City won't change those plans. This is regrettable in our view. The City could, however, at least designate sites—and create the hook-ups necessary for a later installation—during renovation at the minimum as a clear sign of its intentions to move forward.

Meanwhile, we deeply appreciate your indication that the City intends to leave in place the Porta-Potty placed on the Common last fall. That said, it is (by definition) a temporary facility—and a permanent one is needed.

We look forward to working with you as Deputy City Manager, with the new City Manager Mr. Rossi, and with the City Council to reach an expeditious and comprehensive solution to this ongoing problem.

Sincerely,

Richard Parker
Harvard Kennedy School Faculty and
Christ Church Cambridge Social Justice Committee

Mardi Moran
Co-Owner of Tags Hardware and
St. James's Episcopal Social Justice Team

Denise Jillson
Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA)

Tom Tufts
St. James's Episcopal Outreach Ministry

Zach Kerzee
The Outdoor Church of Cambridge and
Harvard Epworth-UMC

Juliet Carey
AIDS Action Committee and
Christ Church Cambridge Social Justice Committee

Ayala Livny
Youth on Fire (YOF)

Valerie Fontana Shulman
Christ Church Cambridge

On behalf of all Advocates for a Common Toilet

Please visit the website we're about to launch: www.cambridgeact.com

Direct return mail to:
Christ Church Cambridge
Attn: Cambridge ACT
Zero Garden St.
Cambridge, Ma 02138

Exhibit 4, continued

Public Restrooms in Cambridge Public Buildings			
Location	Address	Neighborhood	Hours of Operation
Firehouse – North Cambridge-Engine 4	2029 Mass. Avenue	North Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms are inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – O'Neill Branch	70 Rindge Avenue	North Cambridge	10:00 am-8:00 pm –Mon & Wed; 10:00 am-5:00 pm Thur & Fri Closed Tuesday, Saturday & Sunday
Danehy Park	99 Sherman Street	North Cambridge/Alewife	Permanent & temporary restrooms: 7:00 am to dusk, year-round
CHA Cambridge Family Health - North	2067 Mass Avenue	North Cambridge	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Rindge Ave Pool	Rindge Ave	North Cambridge	10:00 am-7:00 pm Seasonal Summer Program
Firehouse – Taylor Sq.-Engine 8	113 Garden	North/West Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms are inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Golf Course Club House	691 Huron Ave.	West Cambridge	April 6:30 am-dusk May-Aug 5:30 am-dusk September 6:00 am-dusk October 7:30 am-dusk November 8:00 am-dusk December 9:00 am-dusk
Library – Collins Branch	64 Aberdeen Ave.	West Cambridge	Mon, Tues & Fri 10:00 am-6:00 pm; Thur 1:00 pm-8:00 pm Closed Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday
Firehouse –West Cambridge-Engine 9	167 Lexington Ave.	West Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Walter Sullivan Water Treatment Plant	250 Fresh Pond Pkwy	West Cambridge	At Range's Station lobby, under clock tower dawn to dusk 7 days/week
Library - Boudreau Branch	245 Concord Ave	West Cambridge	Mon-Wed-Fri 10:00 am-6:00 pm, Tues 10:00 am to 8:00 pm - Closed Thurs, Sat & Sun
Library – Main	449 Broadway	Mid Cambridge Harvard Square	Monday-Thursday 9:00 am-9:00 pm Fri & Sat 9:00 am-5:00 pm Sun: 1:00 pm-5:00 pm (Seasonal)
Firehouse – Main- Fire Headquarters (Engine 1)	491 Broadway	Mid Cambridge Harvard Square	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – Central Sq.	45 Pearl St.	Central Square	Mon, Wed, Fri 10:00 am-6:00 pm Tues & Thurs 10:00 am-9:00 pm Saturday 10:00 am-2:00 pm Closed Sunday
Firehouse – Lafayette Square-Engine 2	378 Mass. Avenue	Central Square	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.

Exhibit 4, continued

Location	Address	Neighborhood	Hours of Operation
City Hall	795 Mass. Avenue	Central Square	8:30 am- 8:00 pm Monday; 8:30 am-5:00 pm Tuesday-Thursday; 8:30 am- noon Fridays
Lombardi Building	831 Mass. Avenue	Central Square	Regular hours: 8:00 am-5:00 pm Hearing Nights 6:00 pm-10:00 pm
Multi-Service Center	5 Western Ave	Central Square	8:30 am– 8:00 pm Monday; 8:30am – 5:00 pm Tuesday-Thursday; 8:30am-noon Friday
CHA Windsor Street Health Center	119 Windsor Street	Central/Kendal Square	Open Weekdays 7:00 am-9:00 pm and Saturdays 9:00 am-3:00 pm
Firehouse – South Side Engine 6	176 River Street	South Side	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Magazine Pool	719 Memorial Drive	Charles River	10:00 am-7:00 pm Seasonal Summer Program
City Hall Annex- McCusker Building	344 Broadway	Inman Square	8:30 am- 8:00 pm Monday; 8:30 am-5:00 pm Tuesday-Thursday; 8:30 am- noon Fridays
Firehouse-Inman Sq. Engine 5	1384 Cambridge St.	Inman Square	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
CHA Cambridge Family Health	237 Hampshire Street	Inman Square	Monday: 8:30 am - 8:00 pm Tuesday - Friday: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm
CHA Cambridge Hospital Campus	1493 Cambridge Street	Inman Square	Reception area: 6:00 am - 8:00 pm Emergency Department restrooms: 24/7
Coffon Building	51 Inman St	Inman Square	Monday 8:30 am-8:00 pm Tuesday-Friday 8:30 am-5:00 pm
Library – Valente Branch	826 Cambridge Street	East Cambridge	Monday & Wednesday 10:00 am-8:00 pm, Tuesday & Friday 10:00 am-6:00 pm Closed Thursday, Saturday & Sunday
Firehouse – East Cambridge- Engine 3	175 Cambridge Street	East Cambridge	6:00 am – 10:00 pm, daily Note: bathrooms inaccessible when firefighters are out.
Library – O'Connell Branch	48 Sixth Street	East Cambridge	Mon, Wed, Thurs 10:00 am-5:00 pm Tues: 10:00 am-7:30 pm Closed Friday, Saturday, Sunday
Robert W Healy Public Safety Building	125 Sixth St	East Cambridge	24 hrs/day 7 days/wk
CHA East Cambridge Health Center	163 Gore St	East Cambridge	Mon, Wed, Fri: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Tues, Thurs: 8:00 am - 8:00 pm

Exhibit 4, continued

Parks and Playgrounds with Public Toilets

Location	Address	Neighborhood	Hours of Operation
Ahern Field	259 Charles Street	East Cambridge	Seasonal
Cambridge Common	1500 Mass Avenue	Harvard Square	Open all year
Danehy Park	99 Sherman Street	North Cambridge	Open all year
Donnelly Field	37 Berkshire Street	East Cambridge	Seasonal
Fresh Pond Reservation		North/West Cambridge	Open all year
Hoyt Field	10 Montague Street	Central Square	Seasonal
Lindstrom Field	40 Granite Street	Charles River	Seasonal
Raymond Field	Raymond & Richdale	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Rindge Field	114 Pemberton Street	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Russell Field	82 Clifton Street	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Sennott Park	175 Broadway	Central Square	Seasonal
St. Peter's Field	99 Sherman Street	North Cambridge	Seasonal
Tobin Field	197 Vassall Lane	North Cambridge	Seasonal

Exhibit 4, continued

July 17, 2013

Richard Rossi, City Manager
And
Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139



Dear Mr. Rossi and Ms. Peterson:

First, let us offer our sincere thanks for having taken the time to meet with us yesterday to talk about public toilets. Our group ACT—Advocates for a Common Toilet—is very encouraged to hear that the City Administration has received our “I Heart Toilets” postcards, taken the issue to heart, and has responded with action steps towards a permanent solution to our need for public restroom facilities throughout in our fine city, starting with Harvard Square.

Secondly, we want to follow up with a note of acknowledgement, highlighting important points made in the meeting. We heard you say that:

- The City is committed to solving this issue for Harvard Square, aiming to have an approved decision by the year’s end, or at most approved in the budget in Spring’14. With a plan and an implementation strategy in place, by Summer of next year, the first permanent public toilet could be built in Harvard Square;
- In order to achieve this, next item on the timeline is an August progress report from the City’s appointed Working Group that will outline recommendations for siting in Harvard Square, followed by a status report presented to the Council in September;
- The Working Group, now served by one public representative, has met five times to date, in order to discern suitable locations for a toilet in Harvard Square, on or near the Common. The location will be as close to the Common as possible. You are working earnestly to identify locations, now, in order to adjust the scope of the Cambridge Common Renovation project if necessary to avoid any backtracking. MacArthur Square or Dawes Island are two leading sites, though engineering studies need to still confirm feasibility;
- The Working Group has met with a representative of the Madden Fabricators who have built the successful Portland Loo model for public toilets and are looking at this model with positivity and seriousness. The +/- \$150k (installed) is within reason for our city. The city has options in terms of budgeting this expense.
- Designing a security and maintenance plan to ensure ongoing use and public acceptance of the toilet is the City’s top concern with this issue. This element that causes slow, careful consideration.
- On a larger scale effort, the Working Group and the Public Health Department is creating a survey to be distributed to key businesses and institutions, especially homeless service providers, to gather information that will lead to deeper understanding of the needs of different population in various areas of our City. The questions currently are being formalized.
- In the meantime, the City has requested better signage for the current restroom facility in the Harvard Square MBTA station. Members of ACT will attest, improvements to that facility are underway.

Thirdly, ACT offers support. We agree with you in saying that in order to be a world class city “we must look like one, smell like one and act like one”. Our community group will do its’ best to prime the public response to this basic amenity—planting seeds of appreciation, respect and responsibility in caring for a public toilet so it may indeed serve all. We will:

Exhibit 4, continued

- Speak positively about the sincere attention, swift conduct, and determination the City has demonstrated to solve this issue in an expeditious manner;
- Continue to spread the word to the public, and offer to help broadcast messages and report from the City through our website and social media pages.
- Reiterate these points when opportunities to speak to our Councillors arise.
- Gather public consensus and stay tuned

Lastly, we are so please to be a part of building political will around the issue of public toilets and we look forward to the built resolution. We encourage communication. The easiest way to reach us is via email at harvardtoilets@gmail.com or by phone, contacting Valerie Shulman at 619-987-9060 (mobile).

For ACT,



Valerie F. Shulman
Cambridge ACT
c/o Christ Church Cambridge
Zero Garden Street
Cambridge, Ma 02138

Cc:
Mayor Davis
Vice Mayor Simmons
Councillor Cheung
Councillor Decker
Councillor VanBeuzekom
Councillor Reeves
Councillor Kelley
Councillor Toomey
Councillor Maher
Members of ACT