From: **Stephen Kaiser** <<u>skaiser1959@gmail.com</u>>

Date: Wed, May 8, 2013 at 12:54 PM

Subject: A Future Agenda for the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

To: The Board of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

From: Stephen H. Kaiser

As the CRA plans for its future and considers the work of the Special Counsel, we are clearly at an important crossroads in moving towards a new, vigorous, responsive and trustworthy Redevelopment Authority. We have a new Board, freed of any ties to the recent missteps of the past. The Board has acquired a year of experience in adopting a budget, revising by-laws and updating its Urban Renewal Plan for Kendall Square. The Board is in public discussions with both the Planning Board and the City Council on what role the Authority can play in the future planning and development goals of the City. The Authority has a new executive officer and a new Strategic Planning Consultant. It retains an active role for the General Counsel and transportation consultants such as Fay, Spofford and Thorndike. It retains committees on legal and financial matters. The Authority has approximately \$10 million in available bank accounts.

By contrast, there are major budget limitations facing both the City Council and Planning Board. No funds are available for planning except for extraordinary studies. Legal Counsel is not in regular attendance at their meetings. There is no clear assignment of strategic planning to any one individual. There are no transportation or infrastructure consultants on-call. There is no master plan for the City. Rezoning proposals are offered and approved before planning documents are prepared, and in the case of Kendall Square planning documents may not be completed at all.

In such a situation, the obvious question to ask is this: how can the Authority help the City Council and the Planning Board? Recent experience with the MIT zoning amendment has shown that the Kendall Square K2C2 planning process did not complete its work, so that no overall plan exists for Kendall Square. Most noteworthy is the absence of a plan for streets, traffic and transit. Also missing is a housing plan, an historic preservation plan, an infrastructure plan, an employment plan, an architectural plan, an open space plan, and a plan for ground level pedestrian circulation and activities, as well as building access. The Board of the Redevelopment Authority was left out in any work on these planning elements and on the zoning proposals that ultimately were offered. Almost all of the concerns raised during the MIT zoning discussion related to planning issues, and not to zoning.

Clearly the Authority has access to funding and consultant assistance to

address many of these concerns in the coming months. The priority should be on assembling a Kendall plan that completes the objectives of the Kendall Square element of the K2C2 process. Any involvement of the Authority at Central Square is completely premature and should be deleted from all discussions until the planning process generally and Kendall Square in particular is resolved.

I foresee and would support an expanded role for the Authority in engaging in city-wide planning activities, once the Kendall Square phase has been completed. Indeed, I would urge that CDD staff now assigned to Planning Board activities be considered, in part, for reassignment to the Authority, and that the Authority would have primary responsibility for city planning and for assuring that the necessary planning is complete before any zoning petitions are filed.

I believe that the Authority can serve this planning function consistent with the provisions of Chapter 121B and Article 7 of the Declaration of Rights. All of my suggestions above are designed to look forward -- towards the future, and to consider existing operational problems in the City.

Planning for the future cannot be properly undertaken without a thoughtful understanding of the past, and in particular the difficulties the Authority has had with a 32-month hiatus of public meetings, unauthorized actions by administrative staff, and quorum problems which may extend back as long as fifteen years. We can learn from the past and recognize the mistakes -- without scapegoating -- so that the system we establish for agency action and coordination will be consistent with the law, will be fair and efficient in its decisions, and will be self-evident to citizens of our urban democracy.

I am prepared to help and work with the Authority in achieving any or all planning and action goals I have outlined above. In doing so I will separate such assistance from any differences I may have with city government over how it conducts its business. I urge in particular that any initiatives with regard to eminent domain land takings should be considered only with great care and precaution against abuse, and should be discussed only at the right time, when the planning process has been corrected.

Stephen H. Kaiser, PhD 191 Hamilton Street Cambridge. Mass. 02139

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