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**Cambridge Citizens Coalition**

**2023 Questionnaire for City Council Candidates**

**Cathie Zusy**

I How strongly do you support these issues before the city? #1 is high (for); #2 is moderate; #3 is low (against)

1. **More Accountable City Government:** Your support for greater transparency/accountability in the city.
   1. 1. 2. X 3 \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. \_\_\_\_\_No\_\_\_\_\_\_\_How have you personally been involved in addressing this? Explain.

The City has taken great strides with this—with their open meeting platform—listing and making meetings publicly accessible online and in person. The budget was also presented and discussed in public forums.

It’s hard for City staff, no matter how smart or committed to their jobs, to move projects forward in a timely way when inundated with asks, often with unrealistic deadlines. As a private resident, past President of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association, and President of Magazine Beach Partners, I’ve found the City to be extraordinarily responsive to requests.

There is, however, room for improvement. I realize that public process is challenging, but it often feels fake. “Public” meetings are often commandeered by PowerPoints, staff talking at us, and don’t appear to be a genuine forum for feedback.

1. **Housing:** Your support for new AH0 (Affordable Housing Overlay) up-zoning amendment
   1. 1. 2. 3 X \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain.

Yes. I’ve submitted testimony many times. We need more housing for people of varied economic means, but blanket ordinances do not allow for nuanced development. I believe in smart growth—denser housing near transportation hubs and corridors—but I don’t think we should have high rises casting shadows all over the City. Usually high-rises are in designated areas.

I also think that geography (location, exiting architecture, open space, trees) and neighborhood sentiment should all be considered in the approval process. A healthy community needs a balance of all of these things.

1. **Transportation:** Your support for re-evaluating city’s bike lane/traffic/parking infrastructure and plans.
   1. 1. 2X. 3 \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain. Yes. I have met with members of the Bicycle Safety Committee, encouraging them to be more flexible and have listened to the concerns of Brattle Street neighbors. I’ve also ridden the bike lanes and attended a North Mass. Ave Advisory Comm. walk.

I’ve also expressed concerns about the peaceful Linear Park turning into a bicycle expressway and our Charles River parklands turning into pavement with 14’-wide cycle lanes andwidepedestrian paths. We need cycle lanes, parks and parking, all.

I am a cyclist and feel safer with separated bike lanes. I also understand the need to create a complete network so that people will choose to cycle. Again, we need balance. We have an aging population. In 2021, 31% of our residents were 50 or older. We need retail access and parking for older people and young families, too, and we should be able to figure out how to have both: bike lanes and parking.

1. **Environment:** Your support for keeping our mature trees (in schools, housing, parks, & other contexts)?
   1. 1.X 2. 3 \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain. Yes. As a board member of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association, I have advocated for the preservation of trees in reviewing curb cut applications. I’ve been more involved in advocating for green open spaces, which include mature trees.

II. We are interested in how knowledgeable and active candidates are in city issues. (Short answer – 1-2 sentences)

1. What is the one key problem/issue you want to achieve in City Council next term?

I hope to help bring balance back to the Council and encourage a more collaborative culture. Yes, we need more housing for people of varied economic means, but not everywhere and at the expense of open space, trees, historic architecture and neighborhood character. And neighbors should have a say regarding where large buildings sprout.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

I have submitted testimony against the AHO and AHO 2.0 and the proposed amendments to reduce the authority of the CHC and their Neighborhood Conservation Districts.

1. What City Council decision over the last term are you most supportive of?

The distribution of $1.8m of ARPA funds to Magazine Beach Park, at 17 acres, the City’s second largest park. Green open spaces nurture community health. During COVID, they were more important than ever. These funds will allow for one last major improvement to the park.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

I advocated for this funding, which will turn a sunken parking lot into a half acre of useable open space. I also inspired the City Council’s 2021 Open Space Policy Order, advocating for the maintenance and expansion of open space citywide.

1. What City Council decision were you most disappointed in the last Council term?

The support for the AHO amendment which, I fear, will result in the haphazard development of tall buildings, located without sensitivity to neighborhood context. I am also concerned by the current Council’s desire to strip the Cambridge Historical Commission of its authority and to gut the Neighborhood Conservation District as a preservation tool.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

I have submitted testimony about both of these issues and have organized neighborhood walks with local activists in E. Cambridge and Mid-Cambridge to show how NCDs can preserve neighborhood architectural character.

1. What City Staff decision over the last Council term are you most supportive of? CDD’s producing an Open Space Plan for Cambridge.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

I helped to draft the 2021 policy order that inspired this. The City needed to update its plan, which had expired in 2016, so that Cambridge has full access to Federal and State funding for open space and so that we can better plan for the future.

1. What City Staff decision were you most disappointed in the last Council term? Their decision not to amend the Bike Lane Ordinance timeline so that they could more thoughtfully engage store owners and neighborhoods in separated bike lane planning. As a result, the rollout was sloppy and there is tremendous backlash.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions. See above.

III. What Issues Help Define You? Highlight those core interests/goals for the 2024-6 Council and explain why.

\_\_X\_\_More balance in commercial and residential needs

We’ve got to examine tradeoffs thoughtfully and plan for future infrastructure needs—now! We are a growing city.

\_\_\_\_More budget accountability

\_X\_\_\_More engagement by residents

We need to hear out our residents and engage and connect them to create community resiliency.

\_\_X\_\_More equity in healthcare, environment, schooling, housing, and related issues

And greater evaluation of existing programs and consideration of how to make them work better.

\_\_\_\_More transparency in Council and City decision-making

\_\_\_X\_More prioritization of historic building reuse

The CHC has been a leader in this: creating affordable housing in an old candy factory and a convent, too.

\_\_\_X\_More support for local businesses

Evaluate what they need.

\_\_\_\_A more multi-dimensional and resident-engaged city planning

\_\_\_\_A more inclusive environmental policy

\_X\_\_\_A more comprehensive transportation policy

Work regionally and across agencies to develop a balanced transportation plan.

\_\_\_X\_Other (explain in 1-2 sentences)

Better maintain city buildings.

Engage our universities to help us find new and better ways to train underserved citizens and young people for jobs at local corporations.

IV. What incident or set of concerns got you interested in running for City Council?

The seemingly weekly blanket ordinances imposed on us regarding housing and the ongoing efforts to reduce the authority of the Cambridge Historical Commission.