



June 19, 2018

Honorable Members of the Cambridge City Council
City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Council@cambridgema.gov

Cambridge City Manager Louis DePasquale
Citymanager@cambridgema.gov

Cambridge City Clerk Donna Lopez
Dlopez@cambridgema.gov

Dear Mayor McGovern, Vice Mayor Devereux, and Councilors Carlone, Kelley, Mallon, Siddiqui, Simmons, Toomey, and Zondervan:

On behalf of the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), I am writing to express our organization's support for the Cambridge Citizens' Petition requesting a Zoning Amendment for a Flood and Heat Resilient Cambridge, which was submitted to the City Council on April 5, 2018. **We support this Petition, which proposes changes to the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance that will improve the resilience of the built environment in the Alewife Brook sub-watershed, and protect the public and the environment from significant threats identified in the Cambridge Climate Vulnerability Assessment.** Those threats include growing flood risk due to more precipitation and storm surge, and increasing frequency and severity of high heat events as our climate changes.

As stewards of the Mystic River watershed, which includes the Fresh Pond and Alewife Brook sub-watershed, MyRWA works to improve water and environmental quality and enhance the public's use and enjoyment of the Mystic River, its tributaries, and related natural resources for present and future generations. We are keenly aware that climate change is expected to increase the frequency and severity of flood and heat events in the Fresh Pond and Alewife area.

From the Cambridge Climate Vulnerability Assessment, the Cambridge Climate Protection and Resilience Plan, and other credible sources, we know that built development, population health, and environmental resources in the Alewife area are particularly vulnerable to damage from increasing inundation. If unchecked, flooding events may result in discharge of contaminated storm runoff to groundwater and surface waters, resulting in drinking and surface water degradation, disease risk, and loss of biodiversity. We also recognize that this area, if it continues to grow with a high percentage of paved and built area, high population density, and lack of tree canopy, will be vulnerable to health impacts from high-heat events.



At a rapid pace, Cambridge is putting in place buildings that will last at least 50 years and establishing a pattern of built environment and infrastructure that is likely to persist for a century. Most of this development is within the 2010 500-year floodplain that is projected to become the 5-year floodplain by 2070. Given this convergence of increasing development and escalating climate change, we feel now is the appropriate time to make the zoning changes that will provide flood and heat resiliency and protect human life, public and private investment, and environmental health and safety in the Alewife sub-watershed for the next 50-plus years.

We recommend that amendments to the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance as outlined in the Petition be adopted soon, so that developments approved in 2018 will follow best practices for climate resilience and protect the public and the environment now and for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick M. Herron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Herron, Executive Director
Mystic River Watershed Association