

10/12/17

Residents React to Police Presence in Wake of Recent Violence

By Prithvi G. Tikhe

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Despite increased police presence after the September 2017 shootings in Cambridgeport and Riverside neighborhoods, residents have mixed feelings about their safety.

In response to the recent uptick of violence in these neighborhoods, the Cambridge Police officials have positioned mobile police stations, added more foot and bicycle officers and continued to analyze criminal patterns throughout the area to allow for faster response and higher visibility. This approach supplemented the regular Traffic Enforcement, Special and Criminal Investigations Units who patrol the area in uniform or undercover.

Cathie Zusy, president of Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association (CNA), said, “I am concerned about the lack of police presence in Cambridgeport since the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) moved their headquarters from Central Square, which is a trouble spot, to East Cambridge.”

According to [police](#), on Tuesday, Sept. 5, at approximately 10:46 a.m., a shooting occurred near River and Auburn streets. As a result, two young males in their 20s sustained non-life-threatening injuries.

Jarred Jones, a 20-year-old from Cambridge, was arrested and charged with assault with a dangerous weapon. However, Cambridge police are still looking for the second suspect –

reportedly a black male in his 20s seen fleeing on a white bicycle. A warrant for his arrest has been issued out of Cambridge District Court for armed assault with intent to murder.

Within a week, on Sunday, Sept. 10, the day of the 25th Cambridge Carnival Festival, a celebration of Afro-Caribbean cultures planned by the community for the community, two separate shooting incidents occurred.

The first shooting incident was close to the main stage of the carnival in the area of Main Street and Albany Street at approximately 4:44 p.m. Two people sustained non-life-threatening, lower-body injuries.

In connection with the carnival shooting, [Michael Coleman](#), a 23-year-old from Dorchester, is facing multiple charges, including discharging a firearm within 500 feet of a building, two counts of assault to murder and carrying a loaded firearm without a license. The firearm was also recovered.

The remainder of the Cambridge Carnival Festival was shut down as a result of the shooting.

At approximately 5:19 p.m., a separate incident took place in the area of River and William streets. Multiple shots were fired, and there were no known injuries, but at least one home was struck. One firearm and ballistic evidence were recovered. Police officials suspect this incident is related to tensions from the carnival.

After an investigation, the CPD arrested [Lamaree Wallace](#), 20, a resident of Boston. He faces multiple charges, including discharging a firearm within 500 feet of a building and carrying a loaded firearm without a license. Wallace was arraigned on Sept. 14. His next court date was Oct. 13 in the Cambridge District Court.

There was also a drug-related arrest made in connection with the River Street incident. [Frantz Teneus](#), 21, a Boston resident, was arrested and charged with possession to distribute marijuana.

During an interview, Jeremy Warnick, director of communications for the Cambridge Police said, “The progress we have made identifying and/or arresting suspects in the incidents on both dates, along with the increased presence, appeared to create a more comforted community.”

Jamie Sabino, a resident of 54 Western Ave. for 32 years, said in a phone interview that her parking lot opens on to River Street. She heard the Sept. 5 shootings while getting ready for work and rushed to her back window. Sabino saw commotion.

“Police cars responded right away,” Sabino said.

However, Zusy said police have been sitting in cars idle looking at their computers near Dana Park in mobile units. Police are trying to be responsive, but this seems unnecessary to her. She said people want to see the CPD engaged in the community: working with the homeless and monitoring troubled spots.

Warnick said, “We make considerable investments collaborating with our community partners to work with our youth, and those who are causing the most social harm.”

In an email, Carolyn Shipley, board member and co-founder of the CNA, said the Cambridge Carnival Festival is notorious for shootings.

Prior to 2012, the CPD reported a number of incidents involving firearms, gunshots, drugs, robberies and assaults in the areas of Kendall Square and Central Square during and after the carnival.

In 2014, a Boston resident was stabbed in the arm during a fight during the festival. The following year, a Roxbury woman was shot in the foot and two males were arrested for disorderly conduct and assault on a police officer in separate incidents during the festival.

Last year, four Boston males were arrested for affray, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest following three separate fights in Kendall Square at the festival. A Dorchester woman was slashed in the face during a fight in Central Square following the festival.

“Let’s not make a mountain out of a molehill,” said Shipley referring to the September shootings. “There have been shootings before in the vicinity of Central Square; it is nothing new.”

However, a CPD review provided by Warnick revealed only five nonfatal gunshot incidents throughout the city prior to the September shooting incidents. That was a 14 percent decrease in serious crime this year when compared to 2016 in the same time period.

Damian Vacca, a resident of 39 William St., biked through the aftermath of the carnival shooting on his way home. He said the crowd was fearful as they dispersed.

Vacca went on to say he has noticed an increased presence of police since the shootings and felt safe living in the area. But people “overreacted” and took the shootings as a sign that the neighborhood was going “downhill.”

Neal Alpert, chief of staff of the office of Mayor E. Denise Simmons, said the mayor’s office understands the residents’ anxiety about the criminal activities at the carnival and in their neighborhoods, and the community’s sense of feeling less safe than in other parts of Cambridge.

“We are also mindful that the status quo is not working,” said Alpert. “We clearly need to find a way to make it more difficult for these violent episodes from recurring.”