Council allows DNA study

By Mark James

The Cambridge City Council voted last night to allow recombinant DNA research in Cambridge under the regulation of a new ordinance.

Unanimous Council approval for the ordinance came shortly after an amendment submitted by Mayor Alfred Vellucci that would have banned almost all such research was defeated 6-to-3.

Recombinant DNA research involves the linkage of genes from different organisms. Researchers expect that the technique will provide important insights into the function of genes, knowledge that may help in the fight against cancer. Opponents have alleged that the resulting new organisms may have new and dangerous properties.

The PJ and P4 classes of this research, as classified by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have been prohibited in Cambridge for the past seven months by a City Council moratorium which expired yesterday. Several researchers are prepared to begin PJ research at MIT soon.

The ordinance is largely the result of the work of the Cambridge Laboratory Experiments Review Board (CLERB), a panel of Cambridge citizens formed last July to study the problem.

They recommended that research be allowed to proceed under guidelines drawn up by the NIH. They also proposed that the guidelines be stiffened with additional monitoring procedures and asked that a Cambridge citizen be appointed to supervise recombinant DNA research.

The council approved several amendments to the CLERB recommendations, most of which were largely procedural. One amendment prohibits any research which is of greater potential danger than that which the NIH recommendations should be performed under PJ physical containment and EK2 biological containment. A fine of $200 per day will be charged for violations.

Associate Professor of Biology Jonathan King, who opposed the research, said that "it was really good that they passed an ordinance" regulating research, but added that he feared it was inadequate since the research can go ahead without the mechanism being built in."

"I think the third-most densely populated city in the US is not the place for this research," King concluded.

MIT's Walter Milne, Special Assistant to the President for Urban Relations, said that "the council, in effect, has voted nine to nothing to adopt, in all its major parts, the report of the CLERB. He asserted that the CLERB recommendations "essential confirm the wisdom of the NIH guidelines."

Football planned for MIT

By Tom Curtis

After a 37-year absence, intercollegiate football is returning to MIT.

Tim Reckart '78 and Bruce Welch '79, two members of SAE's perennial intermural football champions, are organizing a club football team which should begin competition next fall.

Despite a snowstorm, 35 people came to an organizational meeting Thursday evening at SAE. According to Reckart, "99 percent" of those who came were high school lettermen. Many of these earned such honors as All-City, All-State, and even All-Americans. Reckart says he knows about 20 students who could not come to the meeting but are interested.

The first priority of the club is the drafting of a charter which will be done within the next two weeks. Then the club will seek official approval through the Athletic Association.

The club is trying to be admitted to the New England Colonial Football Conference which is made up of nine collegiate club teams from southern New England. The MIT club has already scheduled games for the fall with Assumption College of this conference and Fitchburg State, another school which wants to be admitted to the conference.

Spring practice will begin the second week of April. John Blanchard, who works with the Volunteers for Youth program here, has volunteered to coach the team. Blanchard played for Stanford and the San Francisco 49ers.

The reestablishment of football at MIT means students will now be able to play football at the intercollegiate level as they play all other major sports.