Falafel trucks haven't been such a common sight on Massachusetts Avenue since Cambridge Police began enforcing vending laws.

MIT considers plan for Mass. Av. vendors

By Tony Zampanutti

MIT, after asking Cambridge Police in mid-May to oust the vending trucks from Massachusetts Avenue at the entrance to the Institute, is researching a plan to allow food to be sold from allocated spaces of MIT property.

Vice President for Operations William Dickson '56 decided to have the vendors removed after complaints about the smell of food in building 5, rats breeding around the entrance to MIT, and trucks blocking the MBTA bus stop and the crosswalk.

In the past two years the number of vendors selling at MIT has increased from one or two to about a dozen. Campus Police Chief James Olivieri noted. He emphasized the removal of vendors “was not the work of the Dining Service.”

Under the hawking and vending licenses held by the vendors, trucks cannot park in one spot for longer than ten minutes. Cambridge Police have used the law to remove vending trucks from Massachusetts Avenue and other streets adjacent to MIT.

After the Institute enacted its new policy, vendors lost much business. “It was a complete shock,” said Edith Analetto of Blue Goose Pizza. “We weren’t prepared for it financially.”

MIT is considering leasing approximately four spots to food vendors, according to Olivieri.

Northeastern University, which now operates such a system, has found “there are a lot of problems,” Olivieri said. “Northeastern tells us they opened Pandora’s Box.”

The first problem would be allocation of spaces among vendors, he explained.

Analetto said she expected Blue Goose Pizza would be one of four vendors allocated a space.

At present, although MIT does not want the trucks to stay around the Institute, “pending some solution, we are not trying to drive them off every street in the Commonwealth,” Olivieri added.

The major difference in proposals is how they mix market housing units with commercial buildings, Trumell explained.

He noted MIT is particularly interested in the anticipated traffic flows for the streets running through the Simplex site. Although the Simplex issue has generated much debate, the Institute is researching a plan to allow food to be sold from allocated spaces of MIT property.

Walter Milne, Special Assistant to the President, noted. Most of the debate over use of the Simplex land should not appear until a single developer is chosen and a definite plan proposed, Milne suggested.