

Human Services Commission
Meeting on 9/28/10
Senior Center 2nd Floor
5:30 – 7:30pm

Commissioners Present: Rev. Lorraine Thornhill, Nan Stone, Kati LaBraico, Claudia Hill, Christopher Hall, Marian Darlington-Hope

Staff Present: Ellen Semonoff, Stephanie Ackert, Jolyon Cowan, Jose Soares (recorder)

Presenter: Eileen Ginnetty, Director, Council on Aging

Eileen Ginnetty presented on Aging in Community and said that in October, the Senior Center will have been open for 15 years. The Senior Center in North Cambridge has been in operation for 22 years. Several people from the Department of Human Services and the Community Development Department have been involved and Jolyon Cowan helped write the current report on Aging in Community, which can be viewed on line at http://www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/cp/zng/aging/aging_report_incommunity.pdf

Eileen then went on to discuss the City's involvement with Aging in Community. In 2006, the Cambridge Council on Aging hosted a presentation from Beacon Hill Villages as a new model for aging in place, which is a type of concierge service for ancillary services including arranging for trades people (such as plumbers, etc.) as needed, home health aides, wellness programs, shopping trips, social and recreational services. The Agassiz Neighborhood Council helped sponsor that event and has been a major player in the planning and development efforts in the City. The Department of Human Services Programs (DHSP) then convened a series of panel presentations to inform key stakeholders and the public as to what services were currently available for seniors. Among the participants were the Cambridge Housing Authority, The Mount Auburn Hospital, Somerville Cambridge Elder Services, SCM Transportation, Cambridge Homes, Cambridge Center for Adult Education, and the Cambridge Health Alliance. The Agassiz Neighborhood Council ran a survey to find out from the neighborhood what kinds of services seniors would be interested and out of the results offered reduced fee snow removal, exercise and nutrition classes.

At one of the meetings sponsored by the DHSP, The Cambridge Housing Authority presented on its subsidized housing for seniors and persons with disabilities and its associated programs and income eligibility surprised many participants because of its affordability and quality. Applicants can make up to 80% of the Area Median Income making these programs accessible to middle class residents over 55 years of age.

In 2007, Cambridge at Home was founded as an Aging in Place Village and currently has 280 members and is expanding both in Cambridge and Belmont. The annual membership fee is \$900 for individuals and \$1,200 for couples. Like the Beacon Hill model, the services include Information and Referral, a weekly shopping trip, exercise and nutrition classes, and opportunities to volunteer.

When asked about trends in demographics in Cambridge, Jolyon Cowan stated that currently there are close to 11,000 seniors 65 and over in Cambridge, an increase in the last 20 years, and by 2030, seniors could account for 20% of the city's population. In early 2011, more precise data will be available from the 2010 Census.

Jolyon then presented on "Time Trade Circle," an intergenerational, volunteer based organization with about 500 members focused on time banking. Some of the services provided are childcare, transportation, chores, walking a dog; whatever one needs will be traded for another's service and expertise. The Time Trade Circle has also begun a

new project, TTC Care, which is designed to help a member who needs extra help for a short period of time with meals, companionship, transportation.

Rev. Thornhill asked about the usage, race and ethnicity of the Citywide Senior Center participants. Eileen Ginnetty said that as people age and become frail, the regulars are not seen around as much. Some of the younger seniors tend to come to specific programs and classes and do not stay for the whole day. The Senior Center is looking at lifelong learning, and some programs in conjunction with Tufts and MIT are very popular, e. g., astronomy and Spanish classes. 120-130 people register daily. The Senior Center draws from Cambridgeport, Riverside, Area IV, Central Square and a shuttle picks up people from Millers River and Roosevelt Towers in East Cambridge. There is good representation among African-Americans, Haitians, Asians, and currently a small group of Latina women and Russian elders who come for ESL classes, and a men's group.

Nan Stone asked about possible holes or duplication of services. Eileen mentioned that long term case management, availability of transportation, and hoarding clean up could use more funding. Currently the Senior Center has a full time case manager. She could not think of any duplication of services.

Upcoming related events:

- On October 7, there will be a presentation at the Main Library, sponsored by Councilor Henrietta Davis, on volunteering and lifelong learning.
- On November 10, the Community Development and Human Services Departments will run a panel at the library on housing and supportive services for aging.

The Commissioners were then asked what possible future discussions and themes they are interested in hearing about: Claudia Hill wants to learn more about the recent agency mergers of Concilio/Centro Latino and Guidance Center/ Riverside Community Care. Christopher Hall would like to hear from Food For Free and the impact the recession has had on hunger in the community and how they are using the new CDBG grant for the new transportation program. Nan Stone would like to hear from direct service staff to learn more about the pulse of the communities and their insight on the impact of the recession and human services.

Given that some Commissioners have expressed upcoming schedule conflicts with the fourth Tuesday of the month, a straw poll was taken of Commissioners present and the first and second Thursday of the month was identified as a possible alternate time to meet; we will follow with an email to identify which of these two evenings the Human Services Commission can meet in the future.

Meeting was adjourned.

After polling all Commissioners via email after this meeting, it was decided that future Human Services Commission meetings would be held on the second Thursday of the month from December onwards. Transitioning to this new schedule, the next Human Services Commission meeting will be on Tuesday, October 26, and no meeting will be held in November.