

Human Services Commission Minutes

Meeting 11/10/11

Resource Room, 51 Inman Street

5:30 – 7:30 pm

Commissioners Present: Ayse Atasoylu, Christopher Hall, Kati LaBraico, Lori Likis,

Regrets: Rev. Lorraine Thornhill, Khari Milner, Claudia Hill, Nan Stone

Presenter: George Hinds, Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), Office of Workforce Development coordinator of the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program

George Hinds manages several youth employment programs within DHSP including the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program (MSYEP), which has existed for 30 years and is managed by the Department of Human Service Programs since 1986. MSYEP provides jobs for 6 - 7 weeks in the summer for 20 hours per week to 14 – 18 year olds. The program initially started with 25 teens and currently is at 945 youth working at 135 sites. 95% of sites are located in Cambridge. Non Cambridge sites are the New England Aquarium and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals/Angel Memorial. More traditional sites are the City's Department of Public Works, Parks, summer camps, playgrounds, Cambridge Community Television. Just-A-Start is the largest worksite allowing for 60 teens. George has been with the program for the past 11 years and came through the program as a teen and youth counselor.

For most 14 to 18 year olds this is their first work experience. Many teens will come back and will try a new site and learning experience. Some will work at the same site for several years.

This past summer, 17 teens chose the Police Academy and learned the basics of police work: speed enforcement/ traffic patterns, crime scene analysis.

Youth Speak at Harvard University Graduate School of Education applied to be a site this past summer. Gretchen Brion-Meisels, a former MSYEP participant, and other graduate students designed a project where 15 MSYEP teens using field research methods learned how young people access services. Unsurprisingly they found the internet to be a major source of information and support.

This past summer, the program led field trips to 5 local colleges and universities.

Out of 1,044 applicants, 945 youths were placed in positions. All 14 – 15 year olds were placed, as this is the age group the MSYEP targets first and foremost. Applicants rank their preference of placement sites. 90% are placed in sites of their choice.

Applications are available in May at schools, DHSP, Youth Centers and are also on-line.

In June, there is an orientation where teens find out where they will be working and then they go on a field trip to their site. This summer 22 counselors were hired; each counselor supervises 30 – 35 teens and goes to worksites to monitor and recognize what participants are learning. Counselors are responsible for administrative functions like payroll and planning workshops for the week.

Weekly workshops include resume writing, interview skills, accountability, effective communication, networking, job search, reflection. These workshops are one hour per week as part of their weekly 20 hours. There are also 7 staff trainings on such topics as boundaries, accountability, substance abuse in the home, difficult conversations, college access, and inclusion.

George reported that there was also a lively discussion with teens on what a dream site would look like. Out of the conversation counselors and teens determined that a dream site would have dedicated space for team materials; staff at site would take time to talk to teens and their counselor each week; and staff would listen and read program materials given to them.

Youth come from all over the city and the program is not based on financial need. City residency is required.

In the Fall, there is a much smaller extension of the program for 25 teens who work 10 hours per week. 5 – 8 teens continue at their summer worksites, while others go to new sites.

The next Human Services Commission meeting is scheduled for December 8th at 5:30pm. Wilfred Labiosa, Executive Director of CASPAR, will speak about the various initiatives the agency is pursuing.

Commissioners expressed interest in hearing from Carole Sousa from the City's Community Engagement Team as to their outreach to the linguistic communities in Cambridge.

Meeting adjourned.