

Cambridge Human Services Commission  
Minutes of Meeting 2/14/2013  
5:30 – 7:30pm  
Citywide Senior Center  
806 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge

Commissioners present: Christine Elow, Christopher Hall, Rev. Lorraine Thornhill

Regrets: Lori Likis, Khari Milner, Katharine Emilie Thomas, Ayse Atasoylu, Kati LaBraico,

DHSP staff: Ellen Semonoff, Janice Alger, Jolyon Cowan, Jose Soares (recorder).

Presenters: Susan Mintz, Director of Adult Employment, Michael Merullo, Program Coordinator for Cambridge Works, and both are from the DHSP.

Susan Mintz has been with the City of Cambridge for 22 years in various capacities including within DHSP's Planning & Development Department and the City's Multi-Service Center. She then moved to DHSP's Office of Work Force Development (OWD) and its Cambridge Employment Program (CEP), which is the City's main job search assistance program. Prior to being a City run program, CEP was run by the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training. CEP is located at 51 Inman St. on the 1st floor.

CEP has three career counselors and one part-time job development position. The Cambridge Housing Authority funds one of CEP's career counselors. Participants have to be at least 18 years old and be a Cambridge resident. Services are structured to involve engaging regularly with a career counselor. CEP provides a range of supportive services to clients including resume writing, helping to develop job skills, job search, and interview skills.

While CEP primarily serves clients who have little to no work experience, the program serves a diverse swath of the Cambridge community including serving some clientele with advanced degrees. Clients also come from a broad range of linguistic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. A snap shot of the program participants shows one third are public housing residents, just under 10% are Section 8 voucher holders, 17% are homeless, and 40% live in private unsubsidized housing. In 2012, the program served 320 residents with in-depth career counseling and placed 122 participants in jobs.

CEP can provide services to clients in the program on an ongoing basis as long as participants keep their appointments and are engaged with their career counselors. Some people have been enrolled in the program for two years or more. Participants are introduced to CEP with a group orientation and then can begin individual career counseling services. Employment agencies provide cross referrals and the homeless service providers and shelters refer clients. Twice a year, CEP sends a mailing to all Cambridge Housing Authority resident households with information about the program.

Michael Merullo then began speaking about the OWD's Cambridge Works program. Cambridge Works was founded in 2006 to address the need in the community for a program focusing on targeting youths and young men of color aged 18 to 35 who historically have high rates of unemployment. OWD designed a 13 week employment readiness program targeting this cross section of Cambridge's

population who for a variety of reasons have significant barriers to employment. The first group of participants began in 2008.

Cambridge Works is now in its 10<sup>th</sup> cycle. There are three cycles per year, each lasting approximately 3 months. Program staff interview 35 to 40 applicants and enroll 10 to 15 participants per cycle. The program serves both men and women, however, the majority have been men. In the interviewing process, team members ask numerous questions about an applicant's education, work history, criminal record, drug history, and career objectives. Once participants are accepted into the program, they are placed in worksites to work 30 hours and attend 5 hours per week of professional development classes for the duration of the 13 week cycle. Staff visit each worksite weekly to assess a client's performance and talk to the participant's supervisor. Participants are paid a stipend for the 35 hour week at a rate of \$10/hour. Generally three to four participants per cycle are not ready for a worksite placement and will attend the weekly 5 hour class while they are "on the bench" until staff feel they are ready to step into an employment posting. This helps the program meet participants where they are if they are not yet prepared to take on the responsibility of a regular worksite placement. There have been significant successes with participants who start in this pre-worksite placement program. One participant went from being "on the bench" to a worksite placement, and eventually to a management position at Spaulding Rehab in the facilities department, after finishing the program. "On the bench" participants may need up to 6 months until they are ready for a worksite placement.

These temporary worksite placements are often within City Departments including: the Senior Center, the golf course, the Police Department, the Water Department, Inspectional Services, and the Department of Public Works. But there are currently 15 worksites, some in the private sector including Spaulding Rehab, Clover Foods, the Cambridge Housing Authority, the Inn at Harvard, and New England Development. While there is no promise of a permanent job at the end of the cycle, some private sector organizations including Spaulding and MIT have hired participants full-time after the placement cycle. At the end of each 13 week cycle, there is a graduation ceremony at City Hall.

Work-site placement are combined with intensive case management by the Cambridge Works staff to further develop skills that are necessary for the workplace and to address barriers to full-time employment. Program staff are dedicated and committed to the program, and to the participants they serve. Team members will go to great lengths to work with participants including going to court to vouch that they are enrolled in the employment training program and participating in a worksite. More than once they have kept participants from jail. To date, outcomes from the program have been very promising especially considering the challenges program participants have had. 75% of graduates have been placed into permanent jobs; however, 23% of participants do not complete the 13 week program. Michael emphasized that the strength of the program comes from the relationships between staff and participants. Another sign of the strength of the Cambridge Works program is the large percentage of applicants who come referred from existing participants and graduates. The next Cambridge Works graduation will be April 25<sup>th</sup> at City Hall.

Ellen then gave a brief update on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The City is assuming there will be a cut in the CDBG funding. She suggested that at the next Human Services Commission meeting, scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup>, we discuss the implications of possible funding cuts for the FY 2014 and FY 2015 CDBG program. She also suggested we could have a presentation on either the King Open Expended Day program or the recent Homeless Census performed in the City of Cambridge.

Meeting adjourned.