

Cambridge Human Services Commission
Minutes of Meeting 1/10/2014
5:30 – 7:30pm
Citywide Senior Center
806 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge

Commissioners present: Christine Elow, Katharine Thomas, Christopher Hall, Nan Stone, Ayse Atasoylu,

Regrets: Lori Likis, Khari Milner, Rev. Lorraine Thornhill, Kati LaBraico

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

Presenter: Sasha Purpura, Executive Director of Food For Free

Sasha Purpura started her presentation by saying that Food Not Bombs was founded in 1981 and was later changed to Food For Free. She has been with the organization since July, 2012. Food For Free is housed at The Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC) at 11 Inman Street, Cambridge. Food For Free (FFF) salvages food from restaurants, farmers markets, and the Chelsea produce market and gives it to the needy. FFF runs three programs: Produce Rescue and Distribution, Transportation Partnership, and the Home Delivery program. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) currently funds the Produce Rescue and Distribution and the Home Delivery programs.

Produce Rescue and Distribution last year moved one million pounds of food, mostly fruits and vegetables. FFF purchases food from the Greater Boston Food Bank for the CEOC Food Pantry Network and is reimbursed. FFF delivers to 85 organizations, 55 of them in Cambridge. A main concern is nutrition and FFF, when possible, will pick up organic produce.

Ellen explained that the City of Cambridge funds the CEOC food pantry network at \$96,000 and the Cambridge Health Alliance funds it at \$15,000.

The Transportation Partnership started in 2010. As emergency food programs are volunteer run and lack transportation and storage, FFF picks up orders from the Greater Boston Food Bank and delivers these to the food pantries. When necessary, FFF stores the food at the CEOC food pantry. The Community Development Block Grant also funded the Transportation Partnership for the first year.

The Home Delivery program delivers 40 pounds of food monthly to the elderly and disabled who are unable to use the food pantries. Starting in 2014, the program will deliver twice a month and will expand from the current 60 to 90 households. In a recent survey it became obvious that once a month delivery was not enough. Meals on Wheels also serves this population.

FFF also has access to a farm "Field of Greens", a community supported agriculture in Lexington, and engages volunteers to grow and harvest the produce. In summer and fall this organic produce supplements the food pantries.

Sasha Purpura has a degree in computer science and worked for fifteen years at Lotus. In 2009 she and her husband quit their jobs in high tech to run an organic farm. Sasha went back to school to get an MBA in green technology. She worked for two years along her husband in the farm they bought. She and her husband sold their produce at farmers markets and the left over they would take it back to the farm for the chickens. At this time, she met David Leslie, then the FFF Executive Director, and the FFF drivers and decided to apply for the ED as David Leslie was retiring.

As a practice a lot of food at the end of the harvest is left in the fields and is plowed under. FFF, with the help of volunteers, gleams this produce in various local farms.

FFF partners with Boston Organics in the Home Delivery program and Pedal Power which also helps with deliveries and pickups on weekends.

Last year, FFF implemented internal systems for the drivers who carry tablets to track pickups, deliveries, and inventory.

In October, FFF holds its annual fundraising party "Harvest Moon."

The next Human Services Commission meeting is scheduled for February 13th. Ellen suggested a presentation by the staff at the Area IV Youth Center and the viewing of their video documentary "Boys II Men."

Meeting adjourned.