

Cambridge Kids' Council Meeting
23 September, 2010

Present: Mayor David Maher (chair), Kenneth Reeves (co-chair), Tina Alu, Betty Bardige, Louis DePasquale, Robert Haas, Cheyenne Jones, Pasang Lhamo, Neal Michaels, Robel Phillipos, Ellen Semonoff, Nancy Tauber, Mary Wong

Guests: John Clifford, Claude Jacob (in attendance for Dennis Keefe), Geoff Marietta, Allentza Michel, Bridget Rodriguez

A. Call to order / Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Maher calls meeting to order at 6:13pm.

Mayor Maher asks all to introduce themselves.

B. Updates and Announcements

Mayor Maher thanks everyone for their presence and asks for updates and announcements to begin.

Ellen Semenoff begins, presents and passes around the Department of Human Service Program's (DHSP) Resource Guide. Also, she passes around note that states Cambridge is recognized as "100 Best Communities for Young People," due to many of the ongoing community and city collaborations, including the Agenda for Children, the Kids' Council and its Youth Involvement Subcommittee, Healthy Living Campaign of the Institute for Community, Baby University, the DHSP youth program's door to door campaign with the police department, the DHSP, the DHSP collaboration with the school department in the out-of-school time and middle school initiatives.

Ellen notes plans to honor staff that work with youth in conjunction with the National Lights on Afterschool event.

Ellen also highlights Baby University, having 29 registered families and notes the impact on immigrant families, with all families being low-income and from the Area IV and Harrington areas, equal balance of immigrant to African American families.

Councilor Ken Reeves congratulates Ellen on the outreach work for Baby University.

Ken shares an anecdote about his visit to the Kipp Academy in Andover, arranged by his summer intern who was a former student of that school. He notes it's worth for the Council to look at what schools from other cities and towns are doing.

He also shares his experience at the annual Black Caucus meeting and his participation in a 'brain trust' session.

Ken further discusses a federal initiative to pilot a program on fatherhood. John Clifford adds that the visit to the Kipp Academy is a continuation of what they saw four years ago of charter schools in New York City.

Mary Wong announces that the Youth Involvement Subcommittee (YIS) was featured in a new publication released in August by the National League of Cities titled, "*Authentic Youth Civic Engagement: A Guide for Municipal Leaders*," as an example of authentic youth civic engagement. She also notes that she was contacted and interviewed by the Mayor's Office of Youth and Family Support in Chicago; they are interested in creating a youth council for their city.

Mary states that there are no YIS youth present at this meeting because the program has not begun for the new term. She adds that outreach was extremely successful this year resulting in an increased number of applicants.

Mary promotes a fundraising opportunity at the Cambridge-based Whole Foods markets on behalf of the DHSP Community Schools and notes that it expires today and encourages all to participate.

Mayor Maher adds that Saturday is the family day celebration at Danehy Park, and the Hydro Festival at Fresh Pond will take place on Sunday at 3pm.

Ken Reeves announces that the community bike ride is on October 3rd.

Mayor Maher shares his visit to the Cambridge Community Charter School; he was very pleased with the activities he observed. He adds that 90% of the students are of color, all were very well behaved. He says the curriculum is 'rigorous' and that the MCAS scores are rising; the Kids' Council can learn from them.

Ellen Semonoff asks how many of the students whom attend the charter schools are from Cambridge. Mayor Maher answers that he is not sure, can say that there are 330 students, over 50% of that are students of color. The school buildings are bright; however the second building was tight and stifling.

Ken Reeves adds that the Prospect Hill Charter School has purchased St. Mary's building for an expansion.

Mayor Maher announces that Superintendent Young will be giving a 'state of the schools' address next Tuesday at the Cambridge Public Library main building. He applauds the transformation of the high school and the work in the Cambridge Public School system.

Nancy Tauber states that the School Committee has formed three working groups to look at three areas: facilities; controlled choice; and K-8 education programs. There are two School Committee members on each working group, joined by city employees, teachers and residents.

They will meet with the Superintendent with recommendations. At the same time, the coordinating team will be continuing communication and keep everyone on the same page. Mayor Maher adds the timeline is very ambitious, but he recommends it.

Nancy Tauber recalls the initial preparatory meeting for the working groups.

Nancy also announces that October 7th is the City Sprouts Day at the Tobin School.

C. Public Commentary

Mayor Maher opens the floor for public commentary.

There is no public commentary.

Mayor Maher suggests moving on to adoption of the minutes.

D. Review and Adoption of the Minutes

Mayor Maher opens for vote to adopt the minutes for April 15, 2010 and May 20, 2010.

Action Taken: Neal Michaels motions to adopt the Kids' Council meeting minutes for April 15, 2010 and May 20, 2010. This motion was seconded by Kenneth Reeves. The Kids' Council voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

E. Implementation the Strategic Plan

1. Report & Discussion on Kids' Council Self-Evaluation Results

Mayor Maher calls for Geoff Marietta, consultant on the Strategic Plan to present on the results of the Kids' Council self-evaluation.

Geoff Marietta introduces himself.

He recaps the Kids' Council self evaluation process, stating the evaluation was administered in April and May of 2010, that 17 members responded. He proceeds to present on the evaluation.

There were 30 items; ratings ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. 2 questions were related to the strengths and weaknesses of the Kids Council.

94 % agreed/strongly agreed that the Kids' Council met Strategic Goal 1, to develop indicators on the outcomes of the strategic plan.

76% responded they had a clear understanding of what the Kids' Council is trying to accomplish. 88% responded that what the Council is trying to do would be hard for any single organization to accomplish by itself.

Nearly all felt that they had contributed to the Kids' Council this year, with only one disagreed. Geoff Marietta goes on to explain challenges revealed from the evaluation results are uneven commitment, confusion on roles.

47% of members felt that members invest the right amount of time and have high commitment to Council. Over 41% reported that members have no clear sense of their roles and responsibilities. 35% of members said there was no clear process for decision making.

Geoff adds that some data appeared regarding understanding of the Kids' Council's vision.

53% said their ideas about what the Council is trying to accomplish are the same as others, while 1/3 responded they're ideas are different. 29% said other groups in Cambridge are trying to do what the Kids' Council is doing.

In regards to composition of the Kids' Council, Geoff shares that youth representation is considered a strength.

35% of the respondents felt that not all groups are represented at the table, such as parents and clergy.

29% responded the Kids' Council needs more "people power."

Less than half said that the Kids' Council has taken on the right amount of work at the right pace.

94% of respondents want the Kids' Council to work.

15 out of 17 respondents believe that all members want the Kids' Council to succeed.

Mayor Maher asks what this data can be used for.

Geoff Marietta responds that the Kids' Council members should congratulate themselves on the Kids' Council's success and the group wanting success, and suggest the Council pick 1 or 2 challenges revealed from the evaluation and commit to work on it in future meetings. He notes that the results are normal for many organizations, such as confusion of roles, and considers the challenges to be "low hanging fruits" to address. He would be glad to share suggestions and work with the Council to address these areas.

Mary thanks Geoff and comments that he is now a parent.

Geoff notes that he was not able to present at last May's Kids' Council meeting due to the birth of his son, Harlan, and shares photos of his newborn.

Before proceeding on with the updates on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, Mayor Maher says the school department is looking at its facilities, and where renovation and construction of its buildings is needed; he notes the Baldwin and Morse Schools will be kept at its same size.

Mayor Maher suggests that the Council examines 'controlled choice' and school buildings. He asks if there is a role for members of the Kids' Council to be involved, if there is anyone who could consider this as a project.

Nancy Tauber suggests there is a role that the Kids' Council can play in these areas.

Mayor Maher suggests attending the All School World Cafe as an opportunity for others to weigh in on these issues.

He adds that out of school time, Baby University, issues regarding the health clinic, are spaces where the issues cross. He suggests a bulletin or directory of notices.

Ken Reeves suggests the Kids' Council review the issues of the school buildings. He notes the question of the costs of the renovations of the Tobin and King Schools as examples. Mayor Maher requests Ken attend the meeting taking place on the matter next week.

F. Kids' Council Memberships

Mary Wong notes that there are openings for Kids' Council seats and the Council must vote on candidates by law.

She notes the departure of former member Billy Andre, and that the Kids' Council is in need of parents and community members. Billy has resigned in order to conduct research in Turkey to fulfill his graduate studies.

Mary Wong announces the open memberships and the candidates for those seats and highlights the candidates' backgrounds contained in everyone's handout packets. She notes that Lucy Stroock is the only candidate for the Early Childhood opening and that City law requires at least two candidates for each board vacancy to be forwarded to the City Manager for appointment consideration. She reminds the board that it made an exception to fill this membership last year by requesting to the City Manager to consider only one candidate. Ellen and Tina ask whether Sally Benbasset could be the second candidate for the Early Childhood seat given her background. Mary tells them that she had discussed that possibility with Sally and she does not want to be considered for that seat. Ellen remarks that we should identify a second candidate for that seat.

Ken Reeves announces he must leave early.

Before Ken departs, Mayor Maher calls for a vote to have the candidates forwarded to the City Manager for appointment consideration.

Action taken: Kenneth Reeves motions to recommend to the City Manager the following six candidates (Charlotte Avant, Sally Benbasset, Jessica Daniels, Avra Goldman, Sandra Nunley, and Humbi Song) for appointment consideration to serve as three Community-at-large members on the Kids' Council and the following two candidates (J. David Gibbs and Barbara Kibler) to serve as a Specific Area member. The motion was seconded by Louis DePasquale. All present members of the Kids' Council voted in favor of this motion. None were opposed.

Mayor Maher requests to move onto other strategic plan updates.

E. Implementation of Strategic Plan (*Continued*)

Mary Wong provides updates stating that aside from the Kids' Council self-evaluation, Mayor Maher held a Department Heads meeting with the co-chairs of the Outcome Subcommittees to discuss the purpose and audience for the report on the status of children and families, and the pilot for data collection and analysis. The group decided: the audience would be everyone in the Cambridge; publication should be issues by mid-next year; and content should contain all the news, not only good news and frame negative news in a positive way.

Mary adds that Marsha Lazar of the Cambridge Public Health Department attended the meeting and was very helpful in explaining the process of the creation of the *Cambridge Public Health Bulletin*, which was also intended to inform everyone in the city.

She continues that Julie Wilson of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University has begun working with some of the Outcome Subcommittee co-chairs, Christina Giacobbe, Lt. Lenny DiPietro, and Susan Richards) to conduct a pilot on data collection and analysis by sampling some data sets.

Mary reports that the next step towards development of the status report will be asking the outcome subcommittees to identify 3-5 indicators/measures with existing data sources to forward to the Kids' Council to select for the status report. The plan is to have the outcome subcommittees' list of selected measures at the November Kids' Council meeting.

Mary further shares her community outreach to educate and engage the wider city on the strategic plan and the work of the Kids' Council. Outreach has included speaking at the CRLS School Council, the Henry Buckner School and a session at 808-812 Memorial Drive Apartments.

Mary acknowledges the support of the tenant association in helping her reach out to the residents, Kids' Council members Andrea Collymore and Robel Phillipos, and Robel's mother in the setting up of the session at 808-812 Memorial Drive. Mary asks Andrea to speak on it.

Andrea comments on the meeting, sharing that the participants had a lot of interesting questions comments, the group was diverse, many were immigrants, and they voiced many of their needs. She also says that most seemed to not know about the Kids' Council.

Andrea advocates for more outreach; that with more community engagement, knowledge will increase.

Nancy Tauber asks Mary Wong if she will attend the elementary school council meetings as well to get input from these groups. She remarks that it would be good to get their input.

Mary Wong replies yes, that it is a matter of time and coordination. She then adds that Robel's mother also suggested focus groups as a follow-up to the event at the 808-812 Memorial Drive apartments.

Nancy says that there is a schedule for these school council meetings.

Mary Wong requests suggestions for other groups to engage.

Mary also notes that she is working with Council Member Tina Alu, and the Margaret Fuller House for additional community meetings in Area IV and North Cambridge.

Claude Jacob states that the publication for the Cambridge Public Health Department was designed intentionally as a marketing tool and an information bulletin.

He cautions how the information is used in the future politically, that it can impact how resources are used and allocated.

He asks the Council to revisit how the group hopes to evaluate program effectiveness, saying the Health Alliance tries to use the data to paint a picture, but conversely it can be used for how to prevent disease and to promote health.

G. Meeting Conclusion

Mayor Maher thanks everyone and asks for motion to adjourn the meeting.

Action taken: Louis DePasquale motions to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Neal Michaels and unanimously accepted by all Kids' Council members present.

The meeting concludes at 7:20 pm.