



Cambridge Peace Commission

City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Cambridge Peace Commission Meeting Notes

Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 6:00-8:00

51 Inman St. – Conference Room B, second floor

Minutes

Attending: Frank Connelly, Grove Harris (notes), Thomas Massaro (chair), Mushtaque Mirza, Pat O'Brien, Rachel Wyon

Staff: Brian Corr

Guests: three journalism students from Northeastern University, reporting as for a class assignment, Neskins, Kaitlin, and Nicole.

Regrets: Cecilia Duran, Ardeene Goodridge, Jeff Hansell, Martin Federman, Radhika Rao, Abha Sur, Tami Wilson

Opening, Note-taker, and Check-in

- **Opening:** The meeting opened with Ardeene reading from C. Otto Scharmer

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

The next meeting of the Peace Commission will be on Wednesday, April 15 (as Passover will be on the second Wednesday of the month). Regular meetings in May and June will be the second Wednesday of each month: May 13, and June 10

Updates and Reports

Peace Messenger Cities Meeting

- Brian will be attending the next International Association of Peace Messenger Cities executive board meeting in April in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, traveling with Omar Bandar of Councilor Marjorie Decker's office. In addition to participating, Brian will assess the Peace Commission's continued involvement in the organization and how it can further the work of the Peace Commission. He will also look for opportunities to build a more permanent connection to Abidjan and its commitment to being a Peace Messenger City. Grove Harris will ask Brian to help with follow up with a task from prior visit.

Anti-Gay Protest at CRLS

- The "Westboro Baptist Church" still plans to come to CRLS on Friday March 13 with their messages of hate and in protest of the school's gay-straight alliance, Project 10 East. Brian has been working with different groups at the high school and the community, as well as with the Cambridge GLBT Commission, to develop peaceful responses. Rachael Wyon

reported that the film "Milk" will be shown at the school the day before the protest. There has been a lot of thought by students and faculty about pro-active support of Project 10 East. A number of clergy from a range of religions and denominations will be present and part of the program, and have put together a response. Westboro Baptist does not represent religion, religious groups. Brian will email the latest information the Friday's program to members of the Commission.

Planning for a "Summer of Peace" in Cambridge

The proposed "Summer of Peace" initiative has an overall goal of minimizing tensions and violence among young people in the city. Brian is organizing a meeting on March 25, which will be a combination of 1) helping the Peace Commission to plan its role/efforts this summer around the issues of young people and violence/turf issues, and 2) a chance for people from a range of city departments, the schools, organizations, and community people to come together to talk about what everyone will be doing this summer.

There was then an open discussion:

- There are many programs working towards this aim, but there is a need for them to come together and talk in broad way. How can Peace Commission contribute - an exploration? Arts programming around this.
- Job creation program being expanded, build on existing groundwork, gather those who work on different facets.
- Coordinate information so folks know where to go.
- Foster the idea and concept of a "summer of peace," maybe have a kick off event, but only if all come together and agree.
- Promote, city organizations, schools.
- Peace activities as well as those working with violence.
- Summer programs, making videos.
- Training for summer youth counselors for employment program, role models.
- Rachel offers her sense of the connections: Role for the Commission as convener? Collaborative approach? Sponsor, coordinate, what verbs apply.... Harlem Children's Zone possible model
- Grove will give information about an interfaith youth group in Sharon, Mass. for possibilities. Their model is of youth empowerment.

Brian will report back to the Commission about the meeting and next steps.

20th Annual Cambridge Commemoration of the Holocaust

The 20th Annual Citywide Holocaust Commemoration will take place on May 6, 2009 from 7-9 p.m. at Temple Beth Shalom, 8 Tremont St., Cambridge. The Keynote Speaker is Anna Ornstein. Marty and Brian from the Commission, are working with the Mayor's Office, Women's Commission, Disabilities Commission, the Human Rights Commission, Councilor Henrietta Davis, and representatives of Congregation Eitz Chayim and temple Beth Shalom. The event will include clergy, poetry readings, and performances. Looking for Romani participants for candle lighting, and for performing songs. Meetings happen first Wednesday of month, at noon, open meetings, soon twice a month. Materials about the commemoration will go out, including to commissioners, to spread the word.

Cambridge-El Salvador Sister City Update

Rachel Wyon reported on El Salvador- update on upcoming election, the opposition party candidate ahead, which may mean many changes for the people in Cambridge's sister city of

San José Las Flores. Many local and other folks there as observers, including a joint Sister City/National Lawyers Guild delegation from Cambridge

Retreat Planning

The Retreat Planning Committee (Tami, Frank, Radhika, and Rachel) met on February 20. The committee came up with ideas for the full commission to consider and reviewed a memo from Brian, with background explaining why facilitator is desirable, and proposing a process for doing good work.

In the discussion, there were a number of ideas raised: Small group useful, retreat sooner rather than later being discussed, perhaps shorter retreat sooner, longer later, maybe 2 days. Brian will look into facilitators and possible dates... use new electronic tools to explore, meeting wizard. Not after June 15 to August 30. A daylong retreat in fall is possible.

Tom suggested that members of the Commission should read the memo that went to the planning committee. The questions at end of the memo may be valuable and useful to share around. The small group will figure out when they will meet again.

Process for appointing new members to the Cambridge Peace Commission

Review of draft memo prepared by Brian based on discussions at Commission meeting and with individual members of the Commission. The proposed steps are:

Process Steps:

- Identification
- Initial Contact
- First Meeting
- Attending a Commission Meeting
- Appointment Process
- Orientation
- Checking Back In

A discussion followed that included diversity issues, outreach needed. Pat emailed a concern; the memo is a jumping off point. It was noted that long-time Peace Commission member Larry Ward is now city councilor and therefore is not serving as a member of the Commission. There was a request for updates from Abha Sur who is no longer an active member on her current work within various communities and at MIT. It was suggested that “parallel organizations” could be represented on the commission as a possibility. It was noted that a memorandum of understanding in both directions would help clarify what is expected, and that there had been had verbal versions in the past.

Other items discussed included:

- Create more vision at retreat, flesh out the vision.
- Documents of current vision/ mission available online, with more from Brian.
- Some orientation package to be put together.
- Commission makes recommendations to the City Manager.
- Process discussion about meeting someone in the working setting of the Commission, and wanting their resume to be available upon request.
- Coffee or lunch as preliminary get to know each other is recommended.
- Circulating résumés and cover letters of interested individuals for full vetting was discussed.

- Concerns about the form that approval of recommendations ought to take.
- How to have a timely yet deliberative process for bringing new members onto the Commission.
- Ensuring the diversity of the Commission and that it represents the socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic populations of Cambridge.
- More discussion about how ensure that current members of the Commission have a voice in the selection of new Commissioners without it being too laborious.
- Philosophical considerations could be discussed at a retreat.
- What would potential member of the Commission do for peace in the city, the world, with respect as an underlying principle?

Based on the discussion, Brian will revise the document and distribute it to the Peace Commission, with discussion of language over circulate for approval.

Creating an Alumni Group/Advisory Council

Due to time running out, a discussion about the proposed Advisory Council will be done at a future meeting

Closing

The meeting adjourned after a check-out exercise at 8:15 p.m.