

## **City of Cambridge Citizens Committee on Civic Unity Meeting**

Wednesday, March 11, 2015, 5:30pm, Cambridge Citywide Senior Center

### **Summarized meeting notes**

**Committee members present:** Steven Lee, Jwahir Sundai, Fatimah Muhammad, Josie Patterson, M. Chanta Bhan, Eva Martin Blythe, Lewis Bryant, Susie Flug, Melissa Gonzalez, Kwame Dance, Roxie Coicou

**Staff present:** Taha Jennings, Assistant to the City Manager; Brian Corr, Executive Director, Cambridge Peace Commission and Executive Secretary, Police Review & Advisory Board

**Public present:** Sylvia Barnes

### **Committee format and meeting logistics**

It was noted that this is first official meeting of the Citizens Civic Unity Committee. It is hoped that the group will coalesce around a mission to guide discussions and actions moving forward. The committee was also asked for patience during these early stages of the process. Taha Jennings and Brian Corr will be available for support throughout the process but the direction should come from the group. It may make sense to have a Committee Chair or Co-chairs, and other types of positions, but there may also be some benefit to allowing the committee structure do develop in an organic way and less formally.

Kwame Dance reported that he and Priscilla Lopes began to draft model agenda formats as well as ideas for committee structure. They will also look at examples from other cities with particular attention to leading/facilitating the meetings, and a system for keeping notes. Committee members are asked to give feedback on the committee structure to Kwame and Priscilla by March 25. Kwame and Priscilla will work to finish their draft and share it with the Committee before the next Committee meeting, so that a discussion and a decision about the structure can happen at a future meeting.

Taha stated that he will work to establish a regular meeting date for the Committee. Brian will set up a Doodle poll to compare availability of members.

The need for the group to be able to communicate each other by email was raised. The issue remains to be answered whether this falls under the Open Meeting Law as a public body or if is it advisory to the City staff. Staff cautioned people to be aware that if this group does communicate over email, it should not be discussing the "work of the committee" over email, but rather limit emails to scheduling issues, etc.

A question was raised regarding how to let the public know what this committee is, what it is doing, who is on it, and what its goals and work are. It was noted in response that when the mission statement is finished, that can be part of what the committee shares.

### **Mission statement**

Susie Flug gave an overview of the discussion regarding the draft mission statement that occurred at a January 22nd meeting of a subgroup of the Committee. As a result of that meeting, Susie along with committee members Steven Lee and Josie Patterson, volunteered to start to revise the mission statement based on comments and feedback from the other members. It was agreed that tonight's Committee meeting was not the appropriate time to wordsmith the mission statement. Taha noted that there is some language in the statement based on discussions with the City Manager and Councillor Simmons.

The meaning of the term "researching" found in the third paragraph was raised. Taha and Brian talked about where that might have come from in the process of developing this committee. Members noted that "research" can be thought of broadly, and can include learning from others. There was a question about the relationship of the group to the City Manager and/or the City Council. Another member asked if there is a budget for the committee, and noted that it is hard to think about the work of the Committee or its subcommittees without knowing those two things. Taha said that this group was appointed by the City Manager, and is advisory to the City Manager (and possibly the Council). The group is not explicitly charged with making any specific recommendations but it's possible that recommendations could come out of the committee's work and discussions.

A committee member stated that it makes sense to have a mission, followed by objectives, and then strategies to meet those objectives. It was also stated that the mission of the Committee could be broader than advising the City Manager and City Council, but perhaps serving the City. Further that it seems inherent that this body needs to reach out to the community and serve as a two-way bridge between the City and the community.

Committee members were asked to give feedback on the mission statement to Susie and Steven (with Josie) by March 25.

### **Aspirational visioning Exercise**

Fatimah Muhammad introduced an aspirational visioning exercise for the group. Fatimah, along with Danielle Boudrow, had worked together to develop and facilitate the exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to begin to identify communities to target, as well as proposed actions and outcomes to begin to focus the efforts of the group.

Aspirational visioning exercise format:

- The group discussed several themes that it was felt should be reflected in the Committee's work.
- Each "theme" was written on a large sheet.
- Each person was given a set of smaller post-it notes to stick on the larger sheets.
- On each post-it note, committee members were instructed to write the community or group that they would like to serve, and/or the issue they want to address (be it "everyone" or "at-risk youth"), the proposed activities, and projected outcomes.
- Each smaller post-it note was then placed on a larger sheet that included the *theme* associated with it.

At the conclusion of the exercise Taha volunteered to take the large sheets and write up the results to review at the next meeting.

### **Next meeting**

There was a suggestion that the next meeting be scheduled from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM to better reflect the time needed for discussions. Taha stated that he would extend an invitation for Councilor Simmons to give a presentation on the original Civic Unity Committee in Cambridge. Discussions will also continue on the results of the visioning exercise, as well as the mission and structure of the Committee.