

Cambridge Human Services Commission
Minutes of Meeting 6/13/2013
5:30 – 7:30pm
Resource Room
51 Inman Street
Cambridge

Commissioners present: Christine Elow, Christopher Hall, Ayse Atasoylu, Kati LaBraico

Regrets: Katharine Thomas, Lori Likis, Rev. Lorraine Thornhill, Khari Milner

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

As Commissioners discussed the revision of CASPAR's application for funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Ellen gave a brief update on the leadership change at CASPAR. The former Executive Director came with good ideas, which did not include the Emergency Services Center Shelter (ESC), but he was challenged by their implementation and the agency's mission in accord with its long term collaborative partners. His interest was more aligned with treatment and transition and he envisioned diminishing the shelter bed capacity at the ESC. Fewer shelter beds would greatly impact the people on the street, public health and safety. The current Interim Director, Catherine Pietrzak, is the former Chief Financial Officer. She wants to continue with the ESC shelter and as such requested that their previous CDBG application for the ACCESS transitional program be replaced by their current application for the ESC shelter.

At the time of the monitoring site visit, the ACCESS program was at half capacity and it seemed that CASPAR was having difficulty filling its slots since fewer people in the ESC were ready for treatment and transition, as ACCESS was designed as a pathway out of addiction. CASPAR is discontinuing the ACCESS program at the end of June. The ESC is essential in the winter months when the Cambridge Police and The Cambridge Hospital are always looking for emergency beds. Commissioners recommended funding the ESC shelter.

Ellen explained that the Department of Human Service Programs manages the Public Services portion of the Community Development Block Grant, which is 15% of the total allocation to the City of Cambridge. As the CDBG has been level funded for Fiscal Year 2014, we had talked as a Commission about it making sense to look at having the currently funded agencies be level funded.

Commissioners reviewed CDBG program funding allocations for Fiscal Years 2011, 2012, 2013 (please see attached handout). In Fiscal Year 2011, when CDBG received a 10% cut, agencies with the most need were food pantries/delivery and domestic violence. In the current year, Food For Free Home Delivery program increased its deliveries from 60 to 80 homebound elderly and disable households as the need increased. Based on HUD's level funding for Fiscal Year 2014, Commissioners recommended to the City Manager to level fund the current CDBG grantee programs.

Christine Elow is interested in attending a site visit in July of Daybreak Day Camp one of the CDBG grantee programs.

Commissioners showed interest in hearing more about the emerging Ethiopian community in Cambridge from Binyam Tamene, Executive Director of the Ethiopian Community Mutual Assistance Association, a CDBG grantee, at the next Human Services Commission meeting, scheduled for September 12, 2013.

Also at a future presentation, Commissioners want to invite Cliff Cook, Planning Information Manager at the Community Development Department, to present on the demographic trends in Cambridge.

Meeting adjourned