



Cambridge Human Services Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2018
5:30 – 7:30 PM
Citywide Senior Center
806 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Commissioners present: Christine Elow, Christopher Hall, Anna Leslie, Khari Milner

Regrets: Julie Asher, Nan Stone, Rev. Lorraine Thornhill

Guests: Bran Shim, Sumbul Siddiqui

Presenters: Brian Corr, Director, Cambridge Peace Commission; Liz Speakman, Coordinator, City of Cambridge Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative; Albert Pless, Men's Health League Program Manager, Cambridge Public Health Department

Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) staff present: Janice Alger, Mike Payack (recorder), Ellen Semonoff

I. Welcome, Networking, and Dinner

- Ellen Semonoff welcomed members of the Commission and announced that two guests were in attendance:
 - Former Commission member Sumbul Siddiqui, who recently stepped down from her role as Human Service Commissioner after being elected to the City Council
 - and Bran Shim, who was recently recommended by DHSP staff to be appointed to the Commission

II. City of Cambridge Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative (DGBVPI) Overview

- Liz Speakman, DGBVPI Coordinator
- Liz shared a brief history of the DGBVPI
 - 1994 City Council resolution declaring the City of Cambridge a Domestic Violence-Free Zone (DVFZ)
 - 21 Days of Questions/365 Days of Action campaign, an opportunity for members of the Cambridge community to ask questions about domestic violence in a safe environment
 - In order to maintain the momentum generated with the 21 Days of Questions/365 Days of Action Campaign and coordinate efforts to address the themes identified in the campaign, the City created the position of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Coordinator, for which Liz was subsequently hired

III. Mending Cambridge Overview

- Brian Corr, Mike Payack, Albert Pless, members of Mending Cambridge
 - Mending Cambridge formed as a result of City and Public Health Department efforts to get more men involved in prevention of domestic violence
 - Mission Statement: We are a dedicated and compassionate team of open-minded men committed to engaging and educating ourselves and others in reimagining masculinity and ending gender based violence in a supportive, respectful and compassionate way
 - Mending Cambridge helps plan citywide domestic violence awareness events, such as
 - the annual Domestic Violence Vigil, where Massachusetts residents lost over the past year to acts of domestic and gender-based violence are remembered and honored
 - White Ribbon Day, in which men are asked to pledge to be a part of the solution to ending domestic and gender-based violence
 - Recently, as part of an effort to host more public facing events, Mending Cambridge planned and hosted “Mending Cambridge in a #MeToo Moment: An interactive conversation for men on ending sexual harassment and gender-based violence”

IV. “In Her Shoes” Domestic Violence Community Education Tool

- Brian, Mike, and Albert were trained on facilitation of “In Her Shoes” through their membership in Mending Cambridge
 - Liz Speakman was one of their trainers
 - Brian, Mike, and Albert will facilitate the “In her Shoes” activity with the Human Services Commission, while Liz provides support if needed
- Mike shared the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security’s definition of domestic violence:
 - Pattern of coercive and controlling behaviors and tactics used by one person over another to gain power and control. This may include verbal abuse, financial abuse, emotional, sexual, and physical abuse. Domestic violence occurs in heterosexual, as well as same-sex partnerships, and crosses all ethnic, racial and socio-economic lines.
- Mike also shared statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence (from CDC’s National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010):
 - 1 in 5 women and 1 in 59 men have been raped in their lifetime
 - 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by a partner
 - 1 in 3 adolescent girls experiences physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner
 - 1 in 4 children exposed to any family violence involving adult
 - 2015 DV Census in Massachusetts: 1,795 adults and children helped on one day and 398 turned away (due to capacity issues)
- Brian reviewed the logistics of “In Her Shoes”

- The activity is designed to put participants “in the shoes” of victims of domestic violence
 - Participants are given specific scenarios and asked to make the choices that they think the victim would make (given the victim’s background and history) as they navigate life and public support services
 - Scenarios are based on the real lives of women in the United States
- Members reconvened to debrief the activity as a group
 - Takeaways included:
 - Often times victims are left choosing between two bad options
 - Navigating the system of support services can be very difficult
 - The system can fail victims
- Liz announced that she brought brochures for Transition House, the City’s domestic violence provider, which members of the Commission should feel free to take

V. Winter Warming Center Overview

- Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Services
 - The Warming Center is a welcoming and safe drop-in center where unsheltered adults can come and spend the night and be safe from the environmental hazards of the street during the winter months
 - The Warming Center is scheduled to open the night of Tuesday, January 16, 2018
 - Located in the basement of the Citywide Senior Center (806 Massachusetts Avenue), with access solely through the rear parking lot on Green Street
 - Open 7:30 PM to 6:30 AM, 7 nights a week
 - Operated by Bay Cove Human Services

VI. Announcements

- Brian Corr announced the upcoming Commemoration and Remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King, taking place on Monday, January 15, 11:00 AM to 1:45 PM, at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Central Square

VII. Upcoming Schedule:

- Mike Payack announced that the next meeting of the Human Services Commission is scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2018

VIII. Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Payack, DHSP/Planning & Development