



Wednesday, October 29, 2025  
Main Library - Curious George Room  
459 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

#### Summary of Conversation Topics

- Cambridge Youth Council Update
- Youth Wellness Working Group Update
- UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities Initiative

**Chair:** ~~Mayor Simmons~~

**Co-Chair** ~~Sumbul Siddiqui~~

**Members:** Tina Alu, Shakia Afrose, ~~Johanny Castillo~~, Christine Elow, ~~Lida Griffin~~, Michelle Godfrey, Tabithlee Howard, Caroline Hunter, Kieu Anh Huynh, Michelle Lower, Kam Maali, Jasper Mallon, Maria McCauley, Larisa Mendez-Penate, ~~Dave Murphy~~, Matt Nelson, ~~Geeta Pradhan~~, Bridget Rodriguez, Ellen Semonoff, ~~Liz Stapleton~~, Tagesech Wabeto, Ayesha Wilson, Derrick Neal, Yoyo Yau,

**Executive Director:** Nancy Tauber

**Notetaker:** Andrew Liedtka (Find it Manager)

**CYC Coordinator:** Izzy Schpeiser

**CYC Members:** Joudia Oussaidi

**Guests:** Sarah Lincoln, Connor Epsteinkraus, Ukpung Etteh, Nardose Mengesha, Ayda Geloreyohannes, Eli Du Bose, Lilia Hernandez Sato, Marlees Owayda, Nina Nedrebo, Maddie Regan, Marlees Owayda

#### 5:30 Welcome and Introductions

- Family Policy Council Business
  - Approval of September 18, 2025 Minutes
    - PASSES: Unanimously
- Public Comment
  - N/A
- Announcements
  - The Family Policy Council is the Advisory Council for The Center for Families, the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grantee.

## Icebreaker (Small Groups) - Postcard Activity

### Cambridge Youth Council Update

- CYC volunteered at Rib Fest and sold lemonade. East Cambridge Business Association will donate the proceeds to the CYC Fundraiser this year.
- CYC helped CEOC, YWCA, Cambridge Community Foundation City Council Candidates Night. 2 members spoke on a panel and helped set up for the event.
- CYC had their annual retreat on October 4th at the Citywide Senior Center. They decided on what projects they will work on.
- This year CYC will have 2 subcommittees working on events that focus on community support and service
  - Workshops/events this year like financial literacy, college/career, etc. for other teens.

### Presentation and Discussion

Sides - 10/29 Meeting

Sarah Lincoln, Connor Epsteinkraus, Nancy Tauber

- Youth Wellness Working Group Recommendation Updates
  - Every Youth Connected to a Caring Adult (outside the family)
  - Every Adult Equipped to Support Youth Wellness
  - Every Youth Empowered to Lead
- UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) overview
- Small Group Activity
  - What does Cambridge do well to support children and youth in these 5 areas (Safety & Inclusion, Children's Participation, Equitable Social Services, Safe Living Environments, Play & Leisure)? What can we do to improve?

GLOWS	GROWS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Preschool</li><li>● Afterschool to grade 7</li><li>● The Clubhouse</li><li>● Crossing guards</li><li>● Slow zones near schools</li><li>● Youth council, student government, student school committee, library</li><li>● Youth centers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Children's participation and timing of afterschool clubs for older youth (7th grade and up)</li><li>● Bullying and discrimination</li><li>● There are barriers to access social services</li><li>● More affordable housing needed</li></ul>

- Afterschool programs (Workforce)
- Students get paid to be in programs
- School guidance counselors
- Food gift cards - replacing the backpack program
- Trusted adults
- Teen health center and insurance
- Playgrounds that are safe and everywhere Tennis courts, basketball courts
- Safety net
- Lots of services
- Diverse community - There are a lot of "Cambridges" within the city
- There are lots of parks, playgrounds, open spaces
- School and city sports
- Lots of fundraising events
- Social workers
- Teen health center
- Afterschool programs
- School buses
- Tutors
- Job opportunities
- School guidance counselors
- Lots of opportunities
- Participatory Budget process
- Childcare lottery
- Universal childcare
- DHSP dedicated to humans
- Good upkeep of public parks
- Good afterschool
- Cambridge police moving in the right direction - more community focused.
- CYC
- Youth sports
- Youth programs

- More government support for affordable housing
- Need to support the programs in the "glows"
- Better advertisement so more people are "in-the-know"
- Promoting diversity in education (AP courses)
- Many of the things in the glows are not accessible to all
- Although we have students involved, is it true decision-making, advisory, performative, tokenism? Where is youth voice missing?
- We have lots of services, but do we know if they are the right ones or enough?
- How do we reach the missing?
- Parks and playgrounds are geared towards younger kids, not as much as you grow older
- Inaccessible streets
- Lots of construction happening so streets aren't really safe
- More street lights
- Opportunities exist, but children's participation needs to increase and youth voices need to be heard
- Sidewalks
- Street lights
- Stop signs
- Cyber information
- Digital justice and literacy
- Access to preschool afterschool for all
- Opportunities communicated inequitably
- Not a lot of space for polder youth

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of social services</li> <li>• Playgrounds</li> <li>• Cambridge Science Festival</li> <li>• Youth engaged at Cambridge Public Libraries</li> <li>• PreK access Workshops</li> <li>• Community Engagement Team</li> <li>• Parks and playgrounds</li> <li>• Great free events for young children and families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRLS doesn't always take student feedback</li> <li>• General cost - more common for youth to have to work. Youth help themselves</li> <li>• Mental health supports</li> <li>• Academic supports - tutoring and guidance</li> <li>• Not all families are aware of services</li> <li>• More swimming pools</li> <li>• More equitable housing for young adults</li> <li>• How to increase participation - the way it is presented matters</li> <li>• Adults talking at kids</li> <li>• Only some people know how to advocate for social services</li> <li>• Community Engagement Team goes through parents not directly to young people</li> <li>• Parks and playgrounds not equitable distributed</li> <li>• Events aren't always marketed or accessible</li> </ul>
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- Gallery Walk - What did you notice? What questions do you have?
  - A lot of repetition, similarities between different groups' posters.
  - Lots of opportunities, but barriers to accessing them still prevalent
  - When children brought paper flyers home, they would get more excited about things.
  - Grows section - housing issues appeared in lots of peoples posters. We are helping families with services while they're here, but we aren't retaining them as they grow because they can't afford to stay here.
  - Not a lot of actual space for high schoolers, while other age groups seem to have more opportunities

- Why aren't people spending time in the streets/outside? That's where they used to spend most of their time.
- CFCI examples and benefits
  - Question — where is Salem in the process? They are just starting.
- Small Group Activity - Should we pursue CFCI? Does it meet our criteria for selecting a Family Policy Council focus area?
- Criteria includes:
  - **Advances Equity** – Address racism and inequities in Cambridge.
  - **Is Realistic** – Can be achieved with the time, resources, and capacity we have.
  - **Has Strong Support** – Has commitment and backing from leaders, partners, and the people doing the work.
  - **Focused on Prevention** – Meet the needs of children, teens, and families in ways that are **preventative** rather than reactive.
  - **Improves Systems** – Strengthen or coordinate systems across the community, rather than create new stand-alone programs.
  - **Needs Collective Effort** – Tackle issues that no single organization can solve alone (like *Find It Cambridge* and *Language Justice*).
  - **Builds on What Exists** – Align with and support current efforts instead of duplicating them.
  - **Includes Accountability** – Have clear ways to measure progress and success.
  - **Allows for Flexibility** – Are things we're willing to stop or adjust if they're not working
- **Discussion**
  - Focus on gaps, don't create something entirely new, aligned with FPC criteria to build off of what exists.
  - Did other cities mention anything about children expressing themselves through the arts?
    - Not specifically, but it comes up in Cambridge where we have lots of arts organizations, but they aren't necessarily accessible to everyone.
  - Need to improve student involvement.
  - Feels like Cambridge is already attempting many of the things that other cities are working on (and that we could highlight/improve).
  - Could be an opportunity to highlight things that get overlooked.
  - Could be an opportunity to create a shared vision.
  - Seems like today's "Cambridge" and especially youth feel more isolated.
  - Why are we not taking action right now?

- Point of concern (not dissent) UNICEF could bring lots of support and clout, but we'd still be reaching out to the same groups. In order to work with UNICEF, shouldn't we close some of the gaps first? Wouldn't this set us up for success better?
  - Not just a rubber stamp, needs to be truly beneficial to youth and youth led.
  - Could serve as a unifying force. Would encourage more communication between groups that want to make this happen.
- Vote - Motion that the Family Policy Council pursue the UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiative - **Unanimous**

#### **Next steps**

- Our next meeting will be on Wednesday December 3rd back at the Senior Center. We will be doing a Family Retrospective 2012-2025 with special guests from the Community Engagement Team, Find It Cambridge, Math Matters for Equity, and Language Justice.

**Adjourn – 7:16 PM**