



Cambridge Human Services Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2015
5:30 – 7:30pm
Citywide Senior Center
806 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Commissioners present: Christine Elow, Christopher R. Hall, Lori Likis, Nan Stone, Rev. Lorraine Thornhill

Regrets: Dr. Ayse Atasoylu, Khari Milner

DHSP staff: Janice Alger, Mike Payack (recorder), Ellen Semonoff

Presenters: Alice Cohen, Professional Development Coordinator, Family Engagement Coach, Agenda for Children Out of School Time (OST) Initiative; Susan Richards, Co-Director, Agenda for Children

Guest: Cathy Pemberton, Licensed Social Worker, Cambridge Police Department

Mike Payack welcomed attendees and announced a reordering of the agenda. Announcements will be moved ahead of the Agenda for Children presentation.

Mike provided an overview of the Cambridge Charrette – the City’s strategic planning process for addressing homelessness in Cambridge. The City has entered into a contract with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), the architects of the Charrette model. CSH’s Charrette is a short, intensive process modeled on the community planning process in the physical design world. A steering committee, comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders, identified 6-8 issue areas on which to focus. Two community meetings were held this past June to educate members of the public on the Charrette process and gather input from the community on the issue areas identified by the steering committee. The steering committee used feedback gathered at these community meetings to narrow down the issue areas to 6 focus areas: Serving Frequent Users of Emergency Services; Service Navigation and Systems Coordination; Services to Prevent Homelessness; Increasing Housing Supply for People Experiencing Homelessness; Strategies for Increasing Investment; and The “Housing First” Model. During Charrette Week (September 15-18), a facilitated “fishbowl” panel will be held on each of the key issue areas identified by the steering committee with input from the larger community. Each fishbowl will include an inner circle of 6-8 local and national experts on the respective issue area and an outer circle of 50-200 members of the community. (National experts will be from cities with similarities to Cambridge.) The fishbowl-style sessions will be held on September 15 & 16 at the Sheraton Commander in Harvard Square. Charrette Week will close with CSH presenting draft recommendations to the community for feedback on September 18 at the YWCA in Central Square. CSH will incorporate this community feedback into the final strategic plan. A detailed schedule and other additional information on the Cambridge Charrette can be found at cambridgecharrette.yolasite.com. All members of the public with an interest in addressing homelessness in Cambridge are encouraged to attend.

Mike announced that, as there are currently several vacancies on the Human Services Commission, the City of Cambridge has posted a call for interest in serving on the Commission. Interested parties should send a resume and letter of interest to the City Manager no later than September 30. Mike will forward the link to the posting to the members of the Commission and they should feel free to share with their respective networks. Mike will also invite current members to sit on the interview committee.

Alice Cohen, of the Agenda for Children Out of School Time (OST) Initiative, presented on efforts to increase trauma-sensitivity in OST programs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in four children will experience child maltreatment (which includes all types of abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role [i.e. clergy, coach, teacher]).

Alice described the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES), a collaborative research study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente. ACES demonstrated that adverse childhood experiences have a dose-response relationship with many long-term health and social problems (such as heart disease, cancer, depression, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, and obesity). This means that the more adverse childhood experiences one has during his/her youth, the more likely they are to have these long-term health or social problems.

Alice presented the case for increased trauma sensitivity among providers working with children and youth. Inconsistency in schedule, expectations, and accountability causes anxiety in children. Anxiety and stress affects behavior and the developing brain. Further, evidence shows that children with multiple relationships with caring adults have the best chance to succeed. Therefore, some remedies providers can offer are consistency and caring relationships. Additionally, providers using a trauma-informed approach can employ strategies to “keep kids in their bodies” or keep them in the present: Occupational therapy, mindfulness, and the use of “fidget tools.”

However, working with youth experiencing trauma comes at a cost for provider staff: Secondary trauma. Helping or caring for someone who is experiencing or has experienced trauma can activate provider staff’s stress response (aka “fight or flight” response). People who are experiencing stress often do not act as the best version of themselves. Therefore, in order to care correctly for youth, the community of provider staff needs to support each other. This is called “trauma stewardship.”

Mike Payack announced that the next Human Services Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 8, 2015.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Payack
Planner/Contracts Manager
DHSP/Planning & Development