

**Cambridge Council on Children, Youth and Families
Minutes from the Meeting of 16 February 2012**

at City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, Cambridge from 6:00pm to 8:00pm

Present: Ken Reeves (chair), Robert Haas, Shubham Dhital, Ellen Semonoff, Neal Michaels, Betty Bardige, Charlotte Avant, Tina Alu, Sally Benbasset, Ramsey Beckett, Barbara Kibler, Jessica Daniels, Claude Jacob (representing Allison Bayer)

Guests: Allentza Michel, Ayana Aubourg, Meron Teklehaimanot, Luc De Marrais, Zach Spitz, Isobel Schpeiser, Visceria Givans, Esther Jules, Ashley Correia, Jason Vasquez-Li, Daniel Jean-Louis, Miles Daniels, Daniel Ruben, Lee Gianetti, John Clifford

Absent: Louis DePasquale, Susan Flannery, Andrea Collymore, Jeff Young, Humbi Song, Steve Swanger. *The City Council and the School committee have not yet appointed their representatives for this term.*

A. Call to Order

Welcome & Introductions

Meeting Called to Order at 6:10pm by Acting City Council Chair Ken Reeves

Chair Ken Reeves begins the meeting, noting that he has to leave by 7:30 and that, if the meeting is still going, Lee Gianetti, interim Executive Director of the Council, will chair the rest of the meeting. He asks those present to introduce themselves, which they do.

Chair Reeves mentions that, later in the meeting, there will be an opportunity for everyone to weigh in on the search for a new Executive Director.

B. Review/Adoption of the Minutes (tabled for later in the meeting)

Chair Ken Reeves suggests skipping this item on the agenda for now, and there is no objection.

C. Public Commentary

Chair Ken Reeves asks if anyone has anything to share which is relevant to youth and kids in Cambridge.

Charlotte Avant, who often consults with people on their taxes, reminds the youth present to check their Form 1099s to ensure that their Social Security numbers are correctly entered.

Chair Reeves, seeing no other comments, offers an apology to those present who had recently attended a meeting of the City Council but had to leave before being able to provide their public testimony. He called it an error of the head, not of the heart, and pointed out that if there is anyone who wishes to speak at a City Council meeting who is unable to do so, it is a failure of government.

Jessica Daniels brings up another failure of government, expressing her hope that the City Council can lock themselves in a room and choose a Mayor sometime in the next week, given the effect not having a chair has on the School Committee and its implementation of the Innovation Agenda.

Chair Reeves says he has received the message and will pass it along. He continues:

There isn't good newspaper reporting on this debate of ours, partly because none of us talks to the press, which is partly because the press makes things up. The conversations we are having are really about the future direction of the City: who would like to continue as we've been doing and who would want to do things differently. There are real policy implications.

I've been mayor three times; each time I was elected on inauguration day, and I think this is the fourth time I've been the acting chair while there had been no mayor. I can't really explain what makes the difference between a term in which the mayor is elected immediately and a term in which it takes some time. I'd say it can seem like the electing of the Pope, in which the Cardinals go in a room, and the public doesn't know who's a candidate or what's going on until white smoke rises from the chimney and there's a Pope. But I couldn't agree more that this is taking

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a long time, and I'll point out that I'm not being paid any more for serving as acting chair, so there's no one who wants to know more than I do who is going to be the mayor.

I will let my colleagues know that there is unrest.

D. Updates & Announcements

Chair Ken Reeves asks if anyone has updates or announcements to share.

Allentza Michel announces that the Youth Involvement Subcommittee has been featured in three newspapers recently regarding its work with extending MBTA student passes. *The Council applauds this.*

Claude Jacob announces:

I have a flyer for "Reflection in Action: Building Healthy Communities", an annual forum and day of activities and contests for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders in Boston and Cambridge. There's a speech competition involved, and the theme this year is "Safe plus Healthy". It's being promoted as going along with Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative. I think these flyers have already been distributed to the schools. The deadline for submitting work is March 9, and the day-long celebration is on May 31 at Harvard Medical School.

Chair Reeves asks the students how many of them are seniors, and there are three. He tells them the City has a scholarship program, funded by voluntary contributions from taxpayers, which provides up to 40 scholarships of \$2500 each. He adds that usually it's only people in the know who know about this, and that now includes the students present.

A youth member asks about the deadline for applying for these scholarships.

Chair Reeves thinks it's sometime in early March.

John Clifford adds that the guidance counselors at CRLS should be able to help with the process.

E. Youth Involvement Subcommittee

Chair Ken Reeves invites the Youth Involvement Subcommittee to present on their MBTA project. He adds that the MBTA will be holding a public meeting on February 29th, and that the City Council will be holding a special meeting on February 22nd regarding this issue, with Cambridge's statehouse delegation present.

Presentation on MBTA Project

Ramsey Beckett introduces the MBTA subgroup of YIS. It includes Miles Daniels, Zach Spitz, Daniel Jean-Louis, Luc De Marrais, and Jason Vasquez-Li.

Jason Vasquez-Li begins:

In recent years, the MBTA subcommittee of YIS has been working to extend the valid times on the MBTA student pass from 8:00pm to 9:00pm. We've succeeded at that. We're now trying to extend it further, to weekends. Our rationale is that students are still students on the weekend, both for their lack of much income and for their participation in student activities.

Miles Daniels continues:

Last year, we surveyed teens in Cambridge about their usage of MBTA services. We then shared what we found with the Assistant General Director of the MBTA in April. We found that 72% of students have either a monthly pass or a pay-as-you-go farecard. 16% of students have neither on account of the cost. 62% of the students we surveyed use the MBTA three or more times on the weekend. Currently, the MBTA is proposing numerous service cuts and fare hikes, to go into effect on July 1. We're working to protect the student pass from those cuts.

Luc De Marrais continues:

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The MBTA is facing a \$161 million deficit. There was a lot of debt absorbed from the Big Dig. Another factor in this is lack of enforcement in some contracts, including with MBCR. Another is recent construction they've had to do, such as that occurring on weekends between Harvard Station and Alewife Station. Another is the reduction in federal subsidies.

Zach Spitz continues:

The MBTA has proposed two scenarios to fix the deficit. The first involves a 43% fare increase and fewer cuts to buses and commuter rail, and the second involves a 35% fare increase and more cuts to buses and commuter rail. Under both scenarios, the ferry will be eliminated and The Ride will be diminished and put on a premium pricing plan. Both scenarios include a doubling of the price of a student monthly pass. In scenario one, a student fare will double, and it will increase a little less under scenario 2.

Ramsey continues:

There are three main options we're pursuing in order to protect student passes. The first is a university pass which subsidizes the student pass, modeled on what the CTA does in Chicago. In that program, universities buy passes for their students in bulk, which helps offset the cost of the student pass. The second is to legislate a requirement for a student pass. Right now the student pass is just MBTA policy. The third is to sell advertising space on the back of the student pass.

Daniel Jean-Louis continues:

We're working on scheduling meetings with potential advertisers, we've planned a meeting with the MBTA for the end of March, and we're implementing a letter-writing campaign. And we need you to come to the community meeting on February 29 to show your support.

Ramsey thanks the Council for its time.

Miles adds that a flyer describing the proposed scenarios has been handed out, and though it does not mention the increases to student pricing, those are happening.

Discussion

Ellen Semonoff asks, in response to the idea of universities buying passes for their students, whether any of the local universities do that currently.

Ramsey responds that there may be schools that do this, but what the CTA does, and what they're hoping for the MBTA to implement, is a centralized program for university passes run by the MBTA.

Ellen seeks to clarify that the proposal would be for the MBTA to develop a program like that which the CTA has.

Ramsey confirms this, but adds that YIS is focusing more on the advertising proposal and the legislative route.

Chair Reeves mentions that he heard a third proposal from the MBTA on the news, and wonders if anyone has thoughts on it.

Allentza Michel responds that the MBTA Advisory Board did release a third proposal, with only a 25% increase in fares, but that discussion is still ongoing.

Chair Reeves adds that this new proposal includes an additional tax on sporting tickets and something else which would cover the deficit. He asks if this has been discussed by YIS.

Zach responds that YIS has not met since the release of that proposal.

Chair Reeves finds it interesting that there's a new proposal, now that the MBTA has heard such negative feedback in each of the public meetings they've held..

Chair Reeves asks about one acronym he doesn't know, which is MBCR.

Neil Michaels tells him it is the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail, the private entity which runs the commuter rail for the MBTA.

Luc adds that the debt owed by MBCR is fees they owe the MBTA.

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Zach clarifies that part of MBCR's contract with the MBTA is fees they owe the MBTA due to service disruptions or other errors.

Ellen asks about what legislation YIS will be seeking.

Ramsey responds that, currently, there is no legal requirement for a student fare, and they want there to be a legal requirement that a student fare exist and be affordable.

Zach points out there is nothing illegal about their current plans to dramatically increase student fares.

Neil asks if YIS has been working with other student groups. He posits that these changes would be particularly hard on students in Boston.

Miles says that YIS has met with Youthway, which includes some Boston groups.

Zach explains that Youthway on the MBTA is a coalition of different youth groups which advocates for youth rights on MBTA services. He adds that YIS also worked with Youthway on extending the hours of the student pass.

Ramsey adds that YIS was present at MBTA's public meeting at the Boston Public Library, and that there was a huge outcry from youth at that meeting. She agrees with Neil that the changes are even harder on Boston youth, and shares stories from that meeting of youth who will have to drop out of school for not being able to afford transit.

Chair Reeves reminds that Cambridge's public meeting is to be held on February 29. He wonders if anyone has focused on the cuts that affect Cambridge, specifically.

Allentza points to the flyer which had been distributed, which lists the bus routes to be cut in Cambridge.

Zach speaks about one bus route in particular, Route 68, which is set to be cut. That route is used by many students to get to CRLS. Additionally, he points out, many of the routes into Harvard Square will be cut, and a lot of weekend service will be cut.

Chair Reeves asks if there are more questions.

Ellen, apologetic for asking so many questions, asks if the youth have planned out their testimony for the MBTA's public meeting.

Ramsey responds that they have a week left to plan, that they all plan to testify, and that they'll be convincing the other subgroup to testify, as well.

Chair Reeves points out that this is a significant question for a lot of people, as these are big changes that will change how people live. He asks about a union of riders he knows of.

Ramsey responds that Youthway has been working with the T Riders Union. She adds that Youthway has been holding rallies and has been quite loud, as one would expect.

Jessica Daniels asks if anyone from Traffic, Parking, and Transportation will be at the public meeting.

Chair Reeves isn't sure.

Chair Reeves adds that next Wednesday there will be a meeting at City Hall on this matter, and invites people to join. He notes that the City's statehouse delegation will be at this meeting, including Senator Pat Jehlen, who is now representing parts of the city in the State Senate. He mentions that he would want those going to the Public Meeting to get in touch with Brian Murphy, the new Assistant City Manager for Community Development. Brian, he continues, is a former City Councillor who went on to work for the State and had worked on transportation issues while there, and could help provide a more pointed analysis.

Ellen adds that it's under his leadership that there is a Transportation Planning unit at Community Development, and that group will be working with the City Council to develop the City's governmental response.

Chair Reeves brings up the goal of Trip Reduction, which, he explains to the youth representatives, was a goal from around when they were born of reducing the use of cars. When public transportation is reduced, it increases the use of cars. He wonders how to reconcile that old goal with these new changes.

Barbara Kibler wants the Council to keep in mind the profound effects these changes will have on those who are disabled or are senior citizens who depend on The Ride.

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Chair Reeves speaks of Spaulding Hospital, a rehabilitation unit of Massachusetts General Hospital which recently purchased the Youville Hospital campus. When he was there recently for a pinched nerve, he notes, many of the patients were being dropped off by The Ride. He worries how they will get to their rehabilitation with cuts to that program. He adds that by highlighting localized and specific impacts, such as this one, people can make their strongest case.

Charlotte Avant asks the youth representatives their thoughts on the feasibility of two alternative pricing scenarios. The first is charging the same amount for buses as for trains. The second is increasing fares at rush hour, as they do in DC.

Zach responds that the MBTA has thought through various possibilities, and while there must be some plan that is better than the current proposals, he doesn't know of one.

Chair Reeves notes the MBTA had in the past been heavily subsidized by the State, but the State walked away from it. He thinks people should be talking about that more. He adds that the students were talking about Chicago and Charlotte was talking about DC; he thinks it's important to do more research into how other public transit systems support students. He guesses the main mechanism for this is heavy public subsidies.

Chair Reeves tells the students he is looking forward to pithy, well-rehearsed, well-researched, in-depth, tell-us-how-bad-it-is arguments at the Public Meeting, not only to get the MBTA's attention but also to teach them the facts.

Allentza acknowledges the work of the youths who put this presentation together; she notes they had an hour and a half yesterday to prepare. *The Council applauds.*

Chair Reeves informs the youths that he cannot tell them when they are done with their presentation.

Zach closes the presentation by imploring everyone to come to the Public Meeting.

Chair Reeves suggests the Council return to adopting the previous meeting's minutes.

B. Review/Adoption of Minutes (had previously been tabled)

January 19, 2012

Chair Ken Reeves reminds the Council that any member can move the adoption of the minutes from the meeting of 19 January.

Action taken: Claude Jacob moves the adoption of the minutes from the Council's meeting of 19 January 2012. Neil Michaels seconds the motion. The Ayes carry, and the minutes are adopted.

F. Executive Director of the Kids' Council

Updates on the hiring Process

At **Chair Ken Reeves's** instruction, **Lee Gianetti** reports:

Applications closed on 8 February. We received 35 applications. We've been able to narrow that down to 13 applicants whom we'll interview. Those will occur next Tuesday and Wednesday. It's an interesting group, with no real duplicates. There are 13 different ways the next person could approach this job. We'll then have a second, smaller interview round with the committee doing the hiring, which will be the Council's Executive Committee plus a youth representative.

Discussion

Lee continues:

Tonight we want to get the input and advice of those who are here. We'll break into five groups, and discuss three questions:

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1. What qualities and/or skills do you believe the next director of the Kids' Council should possess?
2. Over the next 5 years, what direction do you believe the Kids' Council should be heading and what projects or areas of concern do you think the Kids' Council should be working on?
3. What questions do you think each candidate for the Executive Director's position should be asked during the interview process?.

When you report back to us, report back only two answers to each question. Make sure to record everything you discussed, though, and I'll send out the compiled answers.

Chair Reeves asks Lee to talk about the timing of the interviews, and whether it will be convenient for everyone. **Lee** responds that they'll be running from 11:00am to 5:00pm on Tuesday and Wednesday, with lunch and some breaks built into the schedule. He adds there will be time on the first day to discuss priorities. The Executive Committee, he notes, has had a chance to look through the résumés, and he says he'll prepare summary sheets to make sure time can be spent talking to the candidates rather than flipping through their résumés.

Chair Reeves asks the Executive Committee to raise their hands. When the Committee met to plan this meeting, he notes, they talked about including youth members in this process, and the importance of that.

Sally Benbasset offers that this is why the interviews were scheduled during school vacation week.

Ramsey Beckett notes that school priorities still exist during vacation, and asks if YIS can talk this over and get back to the Executive Committee on Monday.

Lee responds that he's spoken to Allentza, and they've figured out how to make this work. This satisfies **Ramsey**.

Claude Jacob asks if Lee could speak for a minute about the global goals of the position.

Lee responds that the job posting is in the packet of meeting documents.

Chair Reeves says that the search has cast a wide net. He adds that Lee did a great job, graphing for the Executive Committee who had what qualifications and getting the Committee to say why they chose the thirteen interview candidates over the other applicants. He asks Lee to continue.

Lee breaks the Council into five groups to discuss the three questions about the search for the next Executive Director.

The Council recesses at 7:00pm for group discussion.

The meeting is called back to order at 7:35pm by Lee Gianetti, taking over for Ken Reeves who has had to leave.

Chair Gianetti thanks the Council for their participation in this exercise, and for having people with legible handwriting take notes. He points out that in choosing two answers for each question to mention now, it's not to say the other answers aren't important.

The following thoughts are shared:

Group 1

Question 1, on qualities and skills the next director should possess: Ability to establishing relationships with existing structures; facilitating skills.

Question 2, on the direction and priorities of the Council: The awareness and visibility of the Council and parent involvement; having concrete data and facts and clear products.

Question 3, on what the candidates should be asked: What do you feel you can bring to your work with the Council? What is your experience with youth?

Group 2

Question 1: Good communication skills and public speaking skills; someone who can bring people together.

Question 2: Connecting with diverse families and getting their input, being able to connect with different families of different backgrounds; working with younger kids to make sure they start school ready to learn, as

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there's a lot of focus on high-school-age, and there should also be focus on younger children.

Question 3: How do you move the Council beyond talking to action? What do you bring to the position—what makes you stand out?

Group 3

Question 1: Creative, articulate leader who works well with people of different backgrounds.

Question 2: Better preparation for middle-school students; stronger collaboration between schools and the community, with the city and the community understanding the resources available.

Question 3: It's best not to ask obvious questions, as it would be too easy to make up answers. With that in mind, What are some problems in Cambridge and how would you address them? What would you find most challenging about the position, and how would you address that?

Group 4

Question 1: Follow-through, and knowledge and passion about the City and its youth.

Question 2: Focus on out-of-school activities at all levels; a strategic plan that incorporates specific goals with ideas of how to accomplish them.

Question 3: Why'd you apply and what are your goals? What do you think is the most important resource for youth in Cambridge? These questions would provide insight into the candidates' priorities and knowledges of Cambridge.

Group 5

Question 1: Policy experience, and good communication skills.

Question 2: Evaluating the Innovation Agenda; continuing with projects like Baby U.

Question 3: As this is a policy board for Cambridge, how much do you know about Cambridge? Can you explain an instance in which you crafted and then implemented a policy?

Chair Gianetti expresses his confidence that the Executive Committee will find these thoughts and recommendations very useful as it goes through this process. He reminds that he will go through all the written notes tomorrow and email them out everyone.

G. Future Agenda Items

Chair Lee Gianetti shares that at the last Executive Committee meeting, it was discussed that anyone, not just the Committee, can suggest items for the Council's agenda. He invites people to bring forward topics they wish to discuss in the future.

H. Next Steps

Next Kids' Council Meeting: March 15, 2012

Rescheduling of Meeting

Chair Lee Gianetti asks about rescheduling the next meeting to 22 March.

Ellen Semonoff indicates that many YIS members and some elected officials will have just returned from the National League of Cities conference in DC on the originally-scheduled night.

Chair Gianetti mentions that both this room and the meeting room at the Citywide Senior Center are booked for 22 March, but a meeting room at the Library and the new School Committee room are available for that evening.

Barbara Kibler asks if this is a good opportunity to mention that she won't be able to go to a meeting on 22 March, as the Margaret Fuller House has its board meetings scheduled for the fourth Thursday of every month.

Chair Gianetti wonders if this change-of-date requires a vote.

Ellen thinks it does not. She states that the meeting will certainly not be held on 15 March since the Council

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would be unlikely to get a quorum that night. She adds it would be good to know who can't attend on the 22nd, and thanks Barbara for letting her know she can't ever make it on the fourth Thursday of a month.

Chair Gianetti says he'll include, in the email with the compiled list of ideas from the small group discussions, a question about the suitability of 22 March. Based on responses to that, he'll figure whether or not a quorum can be reached that night.

Chair Gianetti asks for a motion to adjourn.

Action taken: Neil Michaels moves the adjournment of the Council, and Sally Benbasset seconds the motion. The Kids' Council is adjourned at 7:47pm.

Meeting Documents: 1) Agenda for this meeting; 2) Minutes from the Council's meeting of 16 February 2012; 3) Flyer promoting attendance at the MBTA's public meeting regarding proposed service and fare changes; 4) Sheet comparing competing MBTA service and fare change plans; 5) Questions for the small group discussion exercise regarding the search for a new Executive Director