

# Our Work Over the Past Year Regarding Mission and Goals

April 2016

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Citizen Committee on Civic Unity is to foster fairness, equity, unity, appreciation, and mutual understanding across all people and entities in Cambridge. We do this by recognizing and raising awareness of historic, existing and potential civic issues; by providing opportunities for honest dialogue and engagement; and by building bridges across communities to better understand and connect with one another.

## Additional Goals:

- To embrace Cambridge's rich history of diversity and become a city that is a truly welcoming and inclusive community for all.
- To serve as a resource for issues related to civic unity to the City manager and the city council.
- To identify and communicate about relevant issues and citizen concerns.

## Proposed Strategies:

- Prioritize Civic Unity Committee Work
  - Use city resources to support and communicate the work of this committee.
  - Identify shared interests that the City Manager and Council would like to support and communicate to the broader community.
- Acknowledge and Build On History and Promising Practices
  - Using resources from the City, the Historical Commission, the School Committee, Committee members, and the larger community, identify critical moments, case studies, and demographic trends, and connect them to the development of Cambridge culture and community.
  - Research and analyze promising practices being used in other cities to improve civic unity.
  - Present this information, as appropriate, to the Cambridge city council and to the broader community, and detail lessons learned as discussed by the parties most critically affected.
- Foster Communication
  - Create opportunities for public outreach and provide forums for constructive dialogue.
  - Develop a communication plan to educate the broader community about city goals as they relate to civic unity.
- Listen to All
  - Strive for all voices to be respected and heard, and encourage balanced and open conversations.
  - Develop and help implement ways to encourage all people to participate in the discussions, the meetings, and the economic and cultural development of the city of Cambridge.

## Group Priorities Selected During Spring 2015 Visioning Exercise (From 6/2/15 meeting notes)

### **Public dialogue:**

**Target community:** Should engage the entire community; middle and high school students could receive special focus. Also have the ability to address important/emergent local and national events.

**Proposed action:** Bringing people together for planned, structured dialogues and activities in safe spaces that allow people to speak honestly and be heard, including a series of sessions on important topics.

Include training/facilitation from groups like VISIONS and Public Conversation Project.

**Projected outcome:** Increased civic engagement, involvement, and communication.

### **Culture of Respect/Tolerance:**

**Target community:** Mutual respect among existing groups and newer communities coming into Cambridge.

**Proposed action:** Providing opportunities for civic dialogue and fun/social activities that will encourage people to come out and interact with each other and to teach or educate people about respect.

**Projected outcome:** Facilitating communication and interactions between/among people where it may not have previously existed.

### **Cultural Competency:**

**Target community:** There are so many different people in Cambridge who are not connected or do not have much understanding of each other, and work needs to be done both broadly and in a targeted way. It should also have an educational tone and serve to enlighten people.

**Proposed action:** Broad educational forums; creative ways to reach out and communicate with groups; create fun, welcoming opportunities for people to learn about and learn from each other.

**Projected outcome:** More understanding of, and respect for, cultural differences, and increased opportunities for learning about each other. [Long discussion of a definition of cultural competency vs. proficiency accompanied this.] There are action items that the committee can accomplish itself, and other items which are about having an influence on others to push them to implement those actions.

### **Racism (and intersections of race and class):**

**Target community:** Focus on all people to take action to address/end racism, which impacts everyone. Include the intersection of race and class.

**Proposed action:** Training, outreach, public dialogue and focus groups that build understanding. Sharing history and demographics and truth and reconciliation efforts.

**Projected outcome:** Better understanding the City's history and current issues around the intersection of race and class. Provide effective forums for people to engage and communicate.

*Other high priority topics from visioning: Gentrification/Housing/Homelessness and Education/Equity.*

## Current Projects Under Discussion

### **Being Pursued:**

- Cambridge: Who We Are and How We Got Here (presentation and discussion)
- Discussion/Reading Group in partnership with library
- Resource list/Webpage via library
- Co-sponsorship of events (Employee's Committee on Diversity, YWCA, etc.)
- Presenting at other committees/events and inviting presenters to our meetings
- Responding to incidents/events that go against or foster civic unity

### **Mentioned So Far (not not yet taken up by the committee):**

- Community scavenger hunt
- Theater/play outings and discussions
- People of Cambridge, and other items from spring 2015 visioning exercise