Cambridge Kids' Council Meeting
20 May 2010

Present: Mayor David Maher (chair), Ken Reeves (co-chair), Billy Andre, Tina Alu, Andrea Collymore, Ellen Semonoff, Bob Haas, Betty Bardige, Pasang Lhamo, Robel Phillipos, Sam Seidel, Mary Wong,

Guests: Members of the Youth Involvement Subcommittee, Julie Wilson, Bridget Rodriguez Claude Jacob (attending for Dennis Keefe), Christina Giacobbe, Susan Richards, Daniel Ruben, Valerie Polletta, Lorna Peterson, Allentza Michel, Jessica Daniels, Barbara Kibbler, Nancy Tauber, John Clifford

A. Call to Order / Announcements

Mayor Maher calls the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

Mayor Maher asks Claude Jacob to introduce himself, and for all present to do the same.

Mayor Maher thanks those present for their presence, apologizes for the late start, and asks Ellen Semonoff and Mary Wong to share announcements.

Ellen begins, passing around a letter describing upcoming events that speak to the many partnerships extant in the City regarding children, youth, and families. Among these are the first graduation from Baby University, taking place on June 12, presentations from the partnership between the youth centers and Microsoft, the graduation from Cambridge Works, and the graduation from the Community Learning Center. Mayor Maher inserts that the next few weeks will be busy, and Ellen points out that there are more upcoming events, but she wanted to highlight these.

Ellen also presents a resource guide to summer and year-round youth programming, and passes it around.

Mayor Maher thanks Ellen for her announcements and recognizes Ken Reeves.

Ken shares a story from the previous evening's meeting to discuss the budget for the School Department. He relates that a woman who lives in Riverside came to the meeting and inquired as to why her kid can't go to the Montessori program at the Tobin School. Ken wonders how providing public education starting from age three might affect the achievement gap.

Ellen reminds the Council that there are public preschools able to serve 120 students. Ken responds that many groups are being served in this age range, including special education and non-special education students through SpecialStart, and that the Montessori program has a lengthy waiting-list. Mayor Maher shares his views that the discussion regarding the Montessori program is an interesting one, especially considering the closed nature of the

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program and the fact that if a parent looks into the program for a child entering kindergarten, it's too late.

Mayor Maher asks Mary to share her announcements.

Mary informs the Council of a change to the agenda, given that Geoff Marietta cannot be at the meeting due to the birth of his son.   Mary also shares that Susan Flannery cannot attend, as the Library is receiving an award from the Cambridge Historical Commission.   Ken shares that he needs to go to that, and that it has already started.

Mayor Maher chimes in that he, too, needs to leave at some point, and that City Councilor Sam Seidel will be chairing the balance of the meeting.

Ken shares the first offering from the magazine City Limits, which in this issue focuses on the Harlem Children's Zone.

Mary notes the absence of a quorum, and suggests moving along and skipping the adoption of the minutes.

B. Review / Adoption of Minutes

Following Mary Wong's suggestion, the Council skips this section of the agenda.

C. Public Commentary

Following Mary Wong's suggestion, the Council skips this section of the agenda in order to move on while the co-chairs are still present.

D. Implementation of Strategic Plan

Mary Wong introduces Julie Wilson of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (HKS) who has been assisting the Council in its Strategic Plan.

Mary moves on to give a brief overview of the Strategic Plan and the process involved therewith, including a slideshow to go along with her remarks:

> I want everyone to be on the same page with our Strategic Plan before we begin this discussion.   We began the process of developing the Plan in the fall of 2008, and developing the plan took eight months.   We worked with Amoretta Morris, a former student of Julie Wilson, and, through her, Julie Wilson.   In April 2009, we adopted the strategic plan.   The purpose of the initiative, as mentioned in the Plan, is to "promote policies and programs that make Cambridge a city where children and youth are healthy, safe, educated, and civically engaged.   From birth to college graduation and gainful employment, we want all Cambridge children and youth to succeed."   The Plan also enumerates five outcome goals, which are that "Children are ready for school, Children are healthy and live in safe communities, Children and youth succeed in school and are

prepared for work, Children and youth are engaged in enriching activities and civic life, and Children and youth live in stable, self-sufficient, supportive families." The Plan also adopted strategies by which to achieve those outcomes, including promoting common goals and measures, making data-driven recommendations, sharing information with the community, and engaging the community. The Plan's implementation has been on a three-year timeline. We have finished everything we hoped to do between July and November of 2009, as well as everything we hoped to do between November 2009 and April 2010. We have accomplished our goals for this month, and finish that work tonight.

Mary also presents a timeline indicating how the Council has kept to its goals, and asks if there are any questions so far.

A visitor from the gallery asks about the goal of conducting outreach and education activities. Mary responds that she has been in touch with the School Council at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) and with the Henry Buckner School, which is affiliated with St. Paul AME Church, and has kept them informed of what the Council offers.

With no other questions, Mary invites Julie Wilson and the panel of Outcome Subcommittee Co-chairs to speak.

Julie introduces the subcommittee reports:

It's hard work to come up with these performance indicators. One challenge is to come up with a small number of measures. A second challenge is coming up with the data. We don't know what the city already collects, how it is collected, how accurate it is, or how complete it is. We also need to figure out what data needs to be collected that isn't already being collected. The third challenge is to begin collecting and researching all this data to put together in the report due out in 2011.

Mary asks if there is any subcommittee which would like to begin. Claude Jacob shares the work of his subcommittee, which focused on "Children are healthy and live in safe communities":

My co-chair was Neal Michaels from the state. There were four youth on our subcommittee, and our grad students were very helpful as well, and other folks who floated in and out. We had four meetings, and generated a report in December. We looked at definitions, developed a logic model, and tried to find the low-hanging fruit of existing data sources. We tried to connect the dots, to figure out what picture the data were putting together. We took an inventory of the various stakeholders in our outcome to find out who else might be interested in our data and conclusions. We decided on the four topics of healthy weight, access to healthcare, mental health and substance abuse, and neighborhood safety. We also developed a list of 20 indicators to go along with these four topics, and discussed what data might be already available for these indicators, and how useful that data might be to painting a picture of Cambridge. There is certainly

some overlap in indicators with other subcommittees. We are encouraged by our outcome.

The Council applauds the Outcome 2 Subcommittee on its work.

Betty Bardige asks if this subcommittee considered looking at child abuse and trauma data as a possible indicator. Claude responds that it was considered. Betty notes that her particular concern is related to the early-childhood period, and that her subcommittee also looked at the issue but was unable to identify a good dataset. A woman in the gallery who worked with this subcommittee recalls the subcommittee's determination that other subcommittees could find more relevance in this data.

Claude also points out that, in addition to identifying overlap among the subcommittees, the Council could work to identify any gaps left by the various subcommittees in terms of important indicators that are not being considered.

Christina Giacobbe volunteers that her subcommittee, which focused on the fifth outcome, "Children and youth live in stable, self-sufficient, supportive families", go next. She shares the following:

> Our subcommittee included Tina Alu, Lt. DiPietro from the Police Department, and a lot of people in general. I hear we had the most meetings. Our outcome was pretty broad. We broke the goals of stable, self-sufficient, and supportive families into a long list of primary and secondary indicators. We identified a lot of data sources. There were challenges of overlap, for example, we also looked at issues of abuse. We first tried to figure out the age group on which we were supposed to focus, and we decided to include the whole spectrum of 0-22 years of age. The indicators we came up with were, "Children and youth reside with their families in stable, appropriate and affordable housing", "Children and youth live in safe communities", "Families with children have access to a reliable support system", and "Families with children are economically stable and have access to education and training as well as pathways to upward mobility". There is a lot of existing data related to these indicators. We looked at data from the Police Department, data from CRLS, and some data sets from the state. The fact that safety was part of our outcome helped in ensuring that there was data to work with.

Tina Alu continues with her thoughts:

> The whole process was a struggle. We tried not to be limited by the data already extant, as the data which currently exists is not necessarily all that important to us, and what's important to us may not already exist. We also tried thinking about it in terms of what the final report would look like, and, given that, what kind of data should be included. We came up with about 15 or 16 indicators that could be potentially be valuable. Another concern we had was how to ensure broad input with the limited number of people on our subcommittee. We tried to be aware of our responsibility to answer these questions for the whole community.

Tina asks if anyone else from her subcommittee has anything to add. Andrea Collymore chimes in that the ball is, at this point, in Mary's court, and asks about the status report Claude has with him from the Cambridge Department of Public Health.

Claude speaks up about this status report, which he provided to the Council as a template of what can be done in such a setting. Among the challenges that report shares with what the Council will be preparing are figuring out the age range and balancing quantitative data with qualitative data.

Sam Seidel, who is now chairing this meeting of the Council in Mayor Maher's absence, asks if there are any other subcommittee reports. Mary states that there are a few subcommittees yet to report, and also that there is a note from Steve Swanger, co-chair of one of the subcommittees, who is not in attendance tonight.

Sam agrees with Mary that those who are here should present their subcommittees and then the Council will hear the note from Steve Swanger.

Billy Andre introduces himself as a co-chair of the subcommittee working on outcome four, which is "Children and youth are engaged in enriching activities and civic life". He shares the following about the subcommittee's work:

> After the third meeting of our subcommittee, we had the members vote on the most relevant indicators from among those we had already identified. Those that received the most votes were, in order: Youth's level of participation in leadership roles, Youth's level of civic engagement and consciousness, Youth's level of participation in out-of-school time programs, Youth's sense of connection to a broader world and community through their OST programming, Youth's level of passion and excitement around OST activities, Youth's perception of the accessibility of OST programming, Youth's level of future orientation and expressed aspirations around college and career, and Youth's perception of the level of depth and positivity of their relationships with adults and peers. We can also break these eight down into three categories: community service, outreach and enrollment, and mentorship.

Billy invites Susan Richards to continue. Susan shares her thoughts:

> We may have missed the memo on getting low-hanging fruit. We focused on indicators that would involve the direct voices of young people. Most of our indicators would require finding out from young people directly what their level of passion is, what their sense of engagement is. We would need to develop instruments and collect data to continue on this track. We know that there is data already out there, but at some point it will only tell half of a story. We need to figure out what data to collect to finish the story. The process has been exciting, and the people have been interesting. We've had four meetings, and we're still in the beginning of what will be a fairly long process. We better be sure these are our indicators once we set them because they will be telling the story of our community.

Mary invites Betty Bardige to share the process of the subcommittee on outcome one, which is "Children are ready for school."   Betty shares the following:

Our subcommittee was small but committed.   We had Daryl Mark from the library, Jen Bailey who's been running Baby University, and Pasang Lhamo, who was our most active, loyal, and vocal youth member; they were all part of our subcommittee.   We had a few challenges.   We chose to focus on children ages 0 to 5.   Some children enter school at age three, some at age four, but our outcome was that children be ready for kindergarten.   We took 'ready' to mean socially and emotionally well-prepared, well-supported, and ready with language.   These things are all predictors of gaps both in achievement and in health.   Getting outcome data for children this young is difficult. There are only individual assessments and there's not necessarily a single place to find the data.   So we looked at status upon kindergarten entry, even though it only provides retrospective information and says nothing about what happened up until that point.   We needed data on the quality of programs, and on levels of participation, access, and related things.   One complication is that many children are in informal programs, and another is that children often go to programs in other cities at this age.

Our first indicator was that the child has a pediatrician who knows his name and talks to parents about supporting his development.   Our hope would be that this relationship begins at birth.   Our second indicator was that the child is familiar with books and eager to learn from them.   This obviously plays a role in readiness for school but it also speaks to connections with the library.   Our third indicator was that children and families have access to developmentally-supportive child care or family support programs, as we have a lot of evidence that high-quality childcare mitigates difficult environments and challenges.   The next three were "Child is happy and successful in school", "Families feel schools are ready for and welcoming their children", and "Child shows no major language delay when assessed in her first language".   To evaluate all these indicators, we looked for three different sources of data.   We looked for data from individual programs, though we know it would not paint a complete picture.   We considered questions that could be added to the kindergarten-entry questionnaire, to collect data across-the-board. We constructed a teacher survey that could give us more fine-grained data around children's well-being and emotional status.

Mary relays from Steve Swanger of the subcommittee on outcome three, "Children and youth succeed in school and are prepared for work", his thoughts that the youth members of his subcommittee were very engaged but he wished for more parent participation.   Mary also relays from Steve that the work is very challenging, especially in identifying data sources.

Sam asks Claude to explain the publication he is holding, but first checks on the status of the current conversation.

Mary says that Julie will help the Council discuss overlaps and coordination, as the formal name of the Council begins with the word "coordinating".

Sam sees that Kenny Duval might have his hand raised, and asks if he had anything to add regarding the third outcome subcommittee. Kenny responds, "I'm fine, thank you, sir."

Sam asks Claude to go ahead and explain the publication he has in-hand.

Claude passes around copies of a January 2009 bulletin put together by the Cambridge Department of Public Health which it publishes every other year. He shares the following about it:

> It is a template for what the Council's report could look like. We at the Health Department call it a 'glossy' or a 'bulletin'. In the public health field, we talk about "essential services", and this publication is an action related to essential service number three, which is about informing and education the public. When we did this in 2007, we were asking ourselves the question, "How healthy are we?". We talk about public health in terms of three 'P's, which are Preventing, Promoting, and Protecting health. On the back of this bulletin we draw attention to different efforts with each of these 'P's. On the inside, we talk about different factors determining the health of a community. The meat of this bulletin is the far-right column which shares the data and the indicators, and shares how Cambridge compares to Massachusetts, when such data is available. This is a template, we do it every other year, but this is how we share this information. I wanted to share it with the Council to show how we do this at the Department of Public Health.

Sam suggests that the Council first move to the broad overview with Julie and then move back to specific questions.

Julie describes a document which has been handed to the Council:

> You have a set of papers with areas of similarities and overlap across the outcomes. The indicator is listed on the left, the measure after that, along with the number of the subcommittee involved. As an example, pediatric care is being looked at by both Subcommittee One and Subcommittee Two. Then there is a guess as to whether the data currently exist, which can give a sense of some of the challenges the subcommittees have been explaining.

Mary adds that the final column expresses a subcommittee's assessment of the priority of a particular measure, whether it be a primary indicator, a secondary indicator, or something which needs further development to be of value.

Julie continues:

> It's conceivable some of you are collecting data that other agencies don't know about. So what are the next steps in thinking about data availability?
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> I'd also like to share that the students from HKS who have been working on this have been impressed with Cambridge. They've worked with other communities and Cambridge is much more open than others about sharing its data. There are also some

things worth keeping in mind about Cambridge. Because of the universities, the population is highly mobile. It's important to be able to see what is really going on, what represents a problem, and what doesn't need to be worried about. A second thing to keep in mind is the bimodal income distribution in Cambridge, which could lead to average numbers being deceptive. Another issue that arises is how to keep the data once it is collected. Should there be a central repository so that all subcommittees have access to all data? If so, who would be responsible for that? These are the issues we should keep in mind moving forward.

Sam suggests the Council open up the conversation to general discussion about the subcommittee reports, the coordination, and other things that have come up. Sam also asks Claude to clarify, especially for the students present, why it is important to have good data.

Claude notes that there are two important things to clarify, both what the intent of having information is and what the intent of publishing information is. He elaborates:

> The goal is both to paint a comprehensive picture of our community and to help guide us in moving forward. Showing what ought to change is a little different than merely seeing what it is we know. It's important to be clear about what it is we're trying to do with this information.

> Also, I was a strong proponent of having a youth voice in this process. It helps us make sure that we are asking the right questions. If we're asking the wrong questions on the front end, we'll get a distorted picture on the back end.

Sam mentions that Betty made a similar point.

Bridget Rodriguez adds that identifying the audience is also important.

Susan shares her view of the purpose of the report, which is to identify, by showing a low number, areas which need improvement. She also discusses leadership roles, both informal and formal, and stresses why it is an important indicator.

Sam asks if any students have comments. Seeing none, he recognizes Claude.

Claude shares a metaphor that you don't fatten a cow by weighing it. His point is that the information itself will not solve any problems.

Sam again asks if any students have thoughts.

Kenny Duval agrees with what's been said, wants to stress that this all takes time, and wants to focus on the importance of the message sent to the broader community.

Eitan Stern-Robins agrees with Claude's cow metaphor, and sees that measurements are important but they aren't what solve problems.

Ramsey Beckett agrees with Eitan, and agrees that the hard work comes not in collecting the data but in using it.

Sam wonders of the students how they would move from measurement to change.

Eitan suggests that the data will point us in the direction of the change that needs to be done.

Ramsey returns to the cow metaphor.   She sees the ease of putting the cow on the scale. She continues that, upon realizing the cow needs to weigh more, one can begin to think about how to bring this about.

Sam guesses that there would be a lot of agreement on this point.

Ellen Semonoff returns to the question of who the audience is.   She mentions a survey the City conducts biennially regarding city services, and notes that a consistent area in which there is little knowledge of programs is in those provided for and to youth and children.   She states that the proportion of the people of Cambridge who have a direct connection to youth is actually rather small.   It is important, she points out, to decide if the audience of this information is the entire community or only those with a direct interest in children and youth, as this determination will affect the final product.

Claude agrees with Ellen that the definition of the audience makes a huge difference on the final product.   He also sees a potential value in publishing one product for direct stakeholders and another for the wider masses.

Sam wants to return to the students if there aren't others with something to say.

Allentza Michel commends the Council on its efforts to include youth in this whole process.

Sam returns to the students, and asks who they think should get this potential publication first.

A student in the gallery recommends the first recipients should be high-school students.   She states that it is the first point in a student's life when he might be able not only to process the information but also to being taking action.

Michael McKeown thinks the publication should first be given to parents and other adults, as they already are active in voicing their opinions for and on the community.

Kenny Duval agrees with Michael, as parents either grew up in Cambridge or made a conscious choice to move to Cambridge, and therefore have developed strong opinions on these matters and have thought about them deeply before.

Mary asks Kenny to elaborate on what he and Michael mean by "other adults".

Kenny responds that teachers, school administrators, and other adults involved in the educational system should get this information first, along with parents.

Robel Phillipos would focus on people who are connected to youth, as those are the ones who have interest in these outcomes.   Another reason he would focus on parents is because parents can pass the information to their children.

Sam tries to ask his question in another way, by asking who the students would want to talk to about the information the Council is collecting.

Robel responds that he is very close with his mother and he would probably talk about this with her.   He knows that not all parents keep themselves as in-the-loop on these matters as his mother does, but he suggests that a teacher would also be a good person to go to.

Pasang Lhamo states she would discuss this information with the Youth Involvement Subcommittee (YIS).   She shares that her parents are immigrants and are not as informed about these issues, whereas the people she knows on the YIS are.

Andrea indicates her desire to speak, and is recognized by Sam.   She has lived in Cambridge for a long time, and is trying to speak for immigrant parents, either those who have just gotten here or those who have been here for a long time.   She notes that often people decide to move, and only after arriving do they begin to figure out what the City is like.   She thinks it should be shared with whomever might want to see this information.

Ramsey considers having this information available to students through the school or maybe even through a doctor, as most kids see a doctor somewhat regularly.

Michael says he would talk to someone who is in a position either to know someone or to be someone who can effect change on these matters.   If he wanted to bring about change, he would try talking to someone who could bring change.   For a safety-related issue, he would talk to someone at the Police Department.   For a school-related issue, he would talk to someone on the School Committee.

Susan figures this list could get quite long.   She wonders how to go about mobilizing the community.

Michael thinks a good place to start would be students.   He shares his view that passionate students are an unstoppable force who will then bring their ideas to their parents and other people in their lives in a position to effect change.

Kenny agrees that the place to start is awareness among students.   He notes there are many students in the various schools and that a passionate student body can mobilize to advance its interests.

Ellen shares her joy that so many of the students mention they would speak with their mothers.   She also points to the surveys that are frequently done of middle-grades students,

and thinks the Council should think about how this data has and hasn't been used to effect change.

John Clifford points out that wealthy families who move here have researched all of this before they move here, whereas poorer families who move here have not researched all of this (as Andrea had pointed out).   He relates a story that Ken Reeves sometimes tells of his neighbors who moved here from Switzerland already knowing to which school in Cambridge they wanted to send their children.   He also makes the point that often, school choice is not about excellence but is about comfort.

Betty opines that the first consumer of this information is the Kids' Council.   She thinks the Council needs to use the data in two important ways, both to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of current programs, and to explore where the next steps are to be taken.   She thinks this analysis of the appropriate next steps should be taken before a decision on what to publish has been made.

Claude responds to Ellen's comment about the middle-grades student survey, stating that it will be helpful to examine how that was done, as it is similar to some of the approaches the Council might take in collecting information.   Claude also thanks Pasang for sharing her experiences with her parents, who are immigrants, in illustrating to the Council the importance of knowing how to reach those who hold a stake in this debate.   He shares that there are three pegs in thinking about how to frame policy, which are having information, having partnerships that work, and developing a solid plan.   All of these pieces, he shares, play into the question of who the audience is.

Robel wonders when the next version of the Health Department's bulletin will be coming out, and Claude responds that the next one will be in January of 2011.

E. Next Steps

Sam asks Julie to give an update on the next steps, if they are set.

Julie responds as follows:

>   This has been really interesting.   There are multiple purposes for using the data.   Those of us who study performance management often look to the police, as they have historically been very good at collecting data and using it to solve problems.

>   As for next steps, we were hoping to start looking at some of the data over the summer, perhaps to take some indicators and see if we can begin to measure them.   This is an evolutionary process.   People begin with certain indicators in mind, and then as the data starts coming in, people come up with other ideas of indicators they should be tracking.   Also, new data systems come on-line.   We should recognize that we are experimenting and we need to be ready to adjust.   There is a great deal of enthusiasm at HKS over this project, and HKS has agreed to use some money to make this whole process into a

teaching case. There are many other cities that are looking into similar processes, and because we are here in Cambridge, we can study your process quite well.

Sam asks Bob Haas if he has anything to add.

Bob responds that the police are constantly looking at social issues, trying to collect meaningful data on social issues, and trying to learn from that data.

Sam asks if there are any meetings happening over the summer to continue this work. Mary responds that there should be some meetings over the summer once Julie's data starts coming in, to see if the data is saying what the Council thinks it is saying. She wants everyone to understand that each member of the Council brings a different understanding of quantitative analysis. She thanks Claude for bringing his expertise to his subcommittee and to the Council, and notes that others are not as well-versed in analysis of this kind. She thinks it would be helpful to test data over the summer in order to give a better idea of where the Council is headed.

Claude clarifies that he doesn't have a degree in quantitative analysis.

Bridget states that Mayor Maher would like to be involved as the Council moves forward over the summer, and would like to meet with some members of the Council to help keep communication open.

Sam asks if the Council meets in June. Mary responds that it normally does not but that she could look into the possibility.

Mary thanks Julie for her constant investigation and support, and is excited about this process becoming a teaching case. The Council applauds for Julie.

Sam asks the Council to stay tuned as Mayor Maher will be in touch over the summer.

Acting as chair, Sam Seidel adjourns the meeting at 8:01 pm.