



Cambridge Human Services Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2014
5:30 – 7:30pm
Citywide Senior Center
806 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Commissioners present: Dr. Ayse Atasoylu, Christine Elow, Christopher R. Hall, Kati LaBraico, Lori Likis, Nan Stone, Katharine Emilie Thomas

Regrets: Khari Milner, Rev. Lorraine Thornhill

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

Presenter: Cliff Cook, Planning Information Manager, Community Development Department, City of Cambridge

Guests: Suzannah Bigolin (CDD), Nelita DePina (DHSP/CYP), Nicole Horton-Stimpson (DHSP/Inclusion Initiative), Tiffany Lillie (DHSP/Inclusion Initiative), Ellen Thompson (DHSP/Community Schools)

After a round of introductions, Ellen Semonoff announced a reordering of the agenda, moving the demographics presentation ahead of other HSC business.

Ellen introduced Cliff Cook, Planning Information Manager for the Community Development Department. Cliff has worked in his current position with CDD for 19 years. Cliff has also worked for the Cambridge Housing Authority in the past.

Cliff stated that his [PowerPoint presentation](#) draws on information from the 1980-2010 Decennial Census (US Census Bureau), 1991-2012 MA Department of Public Health birth records, 2010-2012 American Community Survey (US Census Bureau), Cambridge Public School Department data, 2006-2010 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy data (US Department of Housing and Urban Development), and Crittenton Women's Union. Cliff further stated that drawing from various data sets can pose a number of problems, particularly that the various data sets cover different periods of time. A data set covering a five year period can be considered very accurate, whereas a data set covering a three year period can be considered fairly accurate, and a data set covering just one year can be considered to have a wide margin of error.

Cliff stated that the population of Cambridge bottomed out in 1980, around 95,000. The latest data indicates that the current population is close to 107,000. Cliff stated that the growth is occurring in minority subpopulations, particularly the Asian population.

Cliff stated that, as of 2010, only 9.5% of Cambridge residents are 65 or older. This is the twenty-first smallest proportion of Senior Citizens in the state. Cliff showed a slide of population broken down by age and gender. He pointed out that around age 50, the population shifts dramatically to women.

Cliff presented data showing that the number of youths (age 17 and younger) living in Cambridge decreased from about 27,000 in 1960 to about 12,000 in 2010. Even though Cambridge's total population grew by about 4,000 from 2000 to 2010, the population of youths decreased by about 1,400 over the same period. However, births are trending upward over this period.

Cliff showed a slide with data on public vs. private school enrollment in Cambridge, using both Cambridge Public School Department (CPSD) enrollment data and US Census Bureau data. Cliff stated that he prefers the CPSD data in this case. In Cliff's opinion, the US Census bureau data on school enrollment cannot be fully trusted as the census does not define whether a charter school is public or private, therefore leaving the definition open to the interpretation of the parent completing the survey. Cliff stated that about 85% of Cambridge children are consistently enrolled in public schools from year to year. The neighborhood with the largest proportion of children enrolled in private schools is West Cambridge. For the 2013-2014 school year, 0.5% of Cambridge children were home schooled.

Cliff presented data on number of youths by census tract, pointing out that the tracts with the highest number of youths tend to be the tracts that are predominantly high-income or predominantly low-income. In Cliff's opinion, a neighborhood with 20% youths is considered a "family neighborhood." By Cliff's definition, there are only three census tracts in Cambridge that qualify as family neighborhoods: the tract in Area 4 encompassing Washington Elms and Newtowne Court, the tract in West Cambridge encompassing Corcoran Park, and the tract in North Cambridge encompassing Rindge Towers and Jackson Place. Cliff stated that youths represent 11.4% of Cambridge's population compared to the median of 22% for Massachusetts cities and towns.

In the 2010-2012 American Community Survey, 45% of Cambridge's black household population reported identifying as African-American, 25% reported identifying as Haitian, 9% reported identifying as Ethiopian, and 4% reported identifying as Eritrean.

Cliff presented slides on neighborhood diversity. Cliff stated that Strawberry Hill, Cambridgeport, Agassiz, and Mid-Cambridge are all comprised of about one-third minority residents. West Cambridge is the least diverse neighborhood, but still has a 20% minority population. Cliff stated that there are only two "majority-minority" neighborhoods in Cambridge: The Port/Area 4 (55% minority population) and MIT/Area 2 (58% minority population). Cliff pointed out that Cambridge's Hispanic population tends to be most densely populated around the city's universities.

Cliff presented data on native-born and foreign-born Cambridge residents. Cliff stated that Cambridge has long been a "port of first arrival." In the early 1900s people were immigrating to work in Cambridge's factories; now they are immigrating to work in Cambridge's high-tech industry. As of 2010-2012, about 29% of Cambridge's residents are foreign-born. The data is further broken down into subpopulations: about 68% of Asian residents are foreign-born, about 44% of black residents are foreign-born, about 44% of Hispanic residents are foreign-born, and about 18% of white residents are foreign-born.

Cliff presented data from the US Census Bureau on language spoken at home. As of 2010-2012, about one-third of Cambridge families speak a language other than English at home. As of 2010-2012, 4.8% of Cambridge residents live in "linguistically isolated households," defined as households in which none of the household members 14 or older speak English very well. However, this percentage is on the decline, down from 7% in 2000.

Cliff presented slides on disability status among Cambridge residents. As of 2010-2012, 7.3% of Cambridge residents have a disability. This percentage was down from 2000, when 10% of Cambridge residents reported having a disability. Cliff speculated that this could be due to a change in the US Census Bureau's definition of disability. For instance, CPSD and the US Census Bureau have different definitions of disability, therefore the numbers between the two sources are inconsistent.

Cliff presented data on household composition in Cambridge. As of 2010, about two-thirds of Cambridge youths live in households with married couples and about one-fourth live in a single-parent household. Among black families with children in Cambridge, about 55% are female-headed. Among Hispanic families with children in Cambridge, about 51% are female-headed. Among white families with children in Cambridge, about 21% are female-headed. Among Asian families with children in Cambridge, about 10% are female-headed.

Cliff presented data on education. As of 2010-2012, about 44% of adult Cambridge residents have a graduate degree, compared to about 19% of adult Boston Metro Area residents, about 17% of adult Massachusetts residents, and about 11% of adult US residents. About 73% of adult Cambridge residents have at least a bachelor's degree. Cliff said that this is three times the US rate and twice the Massachusetts rate.

Cliff presented slides on median income in Cambridge. From 1999 to present, median income in Cambridge has grown 30% in real terms (taking inflation into account); nationwide it declined 8% over the same period. The median income for single mothers in Cambridge is about \$22,000 per year, just half of the median income of single fathers in Cambridge. The median income for married couples with kids in Cambridge is about \$135,000.

Cliff presented data on the minimum cost of living in Cambridge. Cliff pointed out that data from the Crittenton Women's Union does not take Cambridge's high rents into consideration. Cliff therefore calculated the minimum cost of living in Cambridge on his own based on median Cambridge rents. Based on Cliff's calculations, the minimum annual income needed to live in Cambridge for a household of 1 is \$48,636 (an hourly rate of approximately \$23.29). Based on Cliff's calculations, the minimum annual income needed to live in Cambridge for a household of 2 adults and 2 school age children is \$97,080 (two hourly rates of approximately \$23.25). Based on Cliff's calculations, the minimum annual income needed to live in Cambridge for a household of 1 adult and 2 school age children is \$88,956 (an hourly rate of approximately \$42.60).

Cliff concluded his presentation by stating that members of the HSC should feel free to email or call him with follow-up questions. Cliff said he would send a link to the [CDD webpage of his presentations](#) to Mike Payack. Mike will, in turn, distribute this link to members of the HSC.

Ellen Semonoff announced that City staff is currently updating their Boards and Commissions database, which includes members' appointment and term expiration dates. The HSC will be undergoing a reappointment process as necessary.

Mike Payack described DHSP staff's efforts to schedule guest speakers based on Human Services Commissioners' requests. Commissioner Christopher R. Hall requested an update on DHSP's Inclusion Initiative; DHSP staff has arranged for Nicole Horton-Stimpson, Inclusion Manager, to present in the near future. Commissioners Nan Stone and Lorraine Thornhill requested updates on CPSD's Innovation Agenda and CRLS, respectively; DHSP will arrange for a guest speaker from CPSD to address these topics.

Commissioner Christine Elow suggested a presentation on the Cambridge Police Department's Focused Deterrence initiative; DHSP staff will work with Christine to arrange a presentation on this topic. Commissioner Kati LaBraico requested to hear about new Human Services programs; DHSP staff has arranged for a presentation on the Community Art Center's Port Stories Public Art Project, which recently received DHSP funding.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 9, 2014.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Payack
Planner/Contracts Manager
DHSP/Planning & Development