



City of Cambridge
Department of Human Service Programs

51 Inman Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139
(617) 349-6200, Fax (617) 349-6248

February 18, 1993

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager
From: J. J. Gerold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services
Subject: Council Order #28, dated 1/25/93, RE: Status of homeless in Cambridge

In order to respond to this Council Order, Multi-Service Center staff spoke to representatives of several local shelters, who were asked whether shelter beds appear adequate this winter, and what unmet needs the shelters and homeless persons have at this time. It should be noted that over time, many emergency shelters have begun to operate as transitional living programs, at least in part. Shelter providers often found that very short-term stays made it impossible to assist a client with problems which had led to homelessness. With a transitional living format, both the client's support service and temporary housing needs can be met more readily.

First Church Shelter maintains a waiting list for its 15 beds for men.

At **University Lutheran**, half of the 23 beds for men and women are operated as transitional.

The 22-bed **YMCA Emergency/Transitional Program** operated by the Multi-Service Center has a waiting list of seven men (six weeks' wait) at this time. If resources were available, staff would like to offer enhancements to the current program, which features casework and some groupwork with participants. This program would like to provide some meals and personal care items, as other shelter programs do, as well as temporary bus/T passes for men just beginning jobs. Small refrigerators and microwaves for the program rooms would also enable clients to use Food Stamps and pantry packages more effectively. We are attempting to solicit private donations for a number of these enhancements. More ongoing independent living skills groups in the evenings would be another initiative, should additional resources be secured.

DIVISIONS:

Childcare
349-6200

Community Learning Center
349-6363

Community & Youth
349-6231

Council on Aging/Elderly Services
349-6220

Low Income Fuel Assistance
349-6247

Planning & Development
349-6200

Recreation
349-6230

MultiService Center/Homeless Services
349-6340

The severe lack of **transitional rooms for women** in Cambridge is another area of concern. We have not had such a resource since the YWCA closed its transitional rooms prior to its renovations. Phillips Brooks House students have also searched unsuccessfully for both a Cambridge site and funding for a transitional program for women.

Supported employment programs for homeless persons are also a priority. A Kennedy School of Government Policy Analysis Exercise exploring similar programs in other localities is underway.

Shelter, Inc. maintains a year-round waiting list for beds. The shelter on School Street has become more a transitional housing program rather than an emergency shelter. Shelter, Inc. cites the need for more affordable and supported housing, as well as transitional shelter for the homeless mentally ill.

York Street Shelter, although it has relocated from East Cambridge to Somerville, continues to serve Cambridge women by providing a van service. Catholic Charities recently converted six of its 22 beds to a transitional program. The shelter is forced to turn away an average of 7-14 women a week, sometimes up to 5 women a night in winter. In the past, these women had been able to go to Betty's Place, which is now closed. Many women are fearful of going to Pine Street Inn. Their other choice is to wait until 7:00 p.m. when the Sancta Maria shelter in the South End opens. Because there is no transportation plan in place for those women York Street cannot shelter, often shelter staff scramble to find them a place somewhere, and transport them using employees' personal funds.

Because the Multi-Service Center, which serves as the pickup point for women awaiting van transportation to the shelter, is not open on weekends, the women have to wait in the parking lot for the van. York Street staff cite the need for a warm and safe place for the women to wait on weekends, particularly because the vehicle must often make two trips. While a women's day drop-in program operates with City/Emergency Shelter Grant monies five days a week at Shelter, Inc., York Street staff have noted the need for weekend drop-in facilities, particularly on Sundays.

The Salvation Army reports that it turns away 50-60 men per week. The shelter is funded for 35 beds, and has added 15 beds year round to accommodate the overflow, without additional funding. Salvation Army staff believe that many of the men they must turn away sleep in the street in Cambridge rather than go to large shelters in Boston, where they would be in fear. The Army has been discussing construction options to add more beds to their existing space, and will be meeting with Mayor Reeves on this later this month.

Another need cited by the Salvation Army is funding for their feeding program, which is open to both men and women.

CASPAR Emergency Service Center on Albany Street is funded for 55 beds, and has been sheltering 48-55 persons most nights. Desirable donations would include: new socks and underwear, canned and boxed food, and meals prepared by a volunteer group which would prepare food for the entire group and bring it to the shelter.

Federal McKinney Emergency Shelter Grant monies decreased in Cambridge from \$72,000 for FY93 to \$46,000 for FY94. For this reason, the City's proposed spending plan includes decreased amounts for the Shelter, Inc. women's day program, the Salvation Army, Bread & Jams van transportation to shelter programs, and shifting of the CASPAR Emergency Service Center to another funding source.

The shelter system for families operates somewhat differently than that for individuals. Access to family shelters is controlled on a case-by-case basis by the State Department of Public Welfare. Families unable to enter the shelter system often remain invisible to service providers, doubled up with relatives or friends. The **Hildebrand Family Self-Help Center** and the **YWCA/Bigelow Street Family Shelter**, each of which serves ten families, both note that their guests' greatest need is affordable housing. The Hildebrand also mentioned expansion of the Community Learning Center program for the homeless (Project LIFT) from two to five days a week, and the development of after-school activities for children in the shelter as priorities, should additional resources become available. The YWCA/Bigelow program would like a donated computer for the homeless mothers at Bigelow to use in their adult education work. Also, the YWCA is always in need of household supplies (blankets, sheets, towels, kitchen utensils, pots and pans) both to stock the ten family shelter units and to give to families being placed in permanent housing.



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300
FAX. 349-4307

February 22, 1993

To The Honorable, The City Council:

With reference to Awaiting Report Item No. 24, regarding the status of the homeless in Cambridge, please find attached a response received from Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, relative to this matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a light-colored background.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

CONSENT AGENDA ITEM #8

S-84

Awaiting Report Item No. 24 regarding
the status of the homeless in Cambridge.

*See City Mgr. Requests
1993 # 20 for original
order.*

*See also Agenda # 4
of 3/1/93 for supplemental
report.*

In City Council,

February 22, 1993

Placed on file