



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

BETH RUBENSTEIN

Acting Assistant City
Manager for Community
Development

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

FROM: ^{BR} Beth Rubenstein, Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development

DATE: February 2, 1999

RE: Calendar Item #001: Cost-effective measures to foster and strengthen voluntary neighborhood organizations in Cambridge

City departments currently work with many voluntary neighborhood organizations to identify and resolve issues in the areas of physical planning, construction of physical improvements such as parks and streetscape improvements, affordable housing development, and environmental and transportation planning. Some of the groups which work regularly with the Community Development Department include:

- **Standing Committees** (e.g. Harvard Square Advisory Committee, Central Square Advisory Committee, Planning Board, Pedestrian Committee, Bicycle Committee, etc.)
- **Neighborhood Organizations** (e.g. Porter Square Neighbors Association, East Cambridge Planning Team, Cambridgeport Neighborhood Initiative, Alewife Study Group, Creighton-Porter-Regent or CPR, Area 4 Coalition, etc.)
- **Ad hoc groups** which form around specific issues (e.g. Citywide Growth Management Advisory Committee, North Cambridge Railroad Safety Crossing Study Committee, Cambridgeport Roadway Advisory Committee, Cambridge Street Advisory Committee, Porter Square Roadways Advisory Committee, Fresh Pond Master Plan Advisory Committee, Charles River Master Plan Advisory Committee, etc.).

When interest in a new project or issue emerges, neighborhood groups may request participation by CDD staff to discuss areas of concern, whether on specific local issues (e.g. Polaroid development, Grace site development) or areas of wider concern, such as area-wide planning issues (e.g. CDD/neighborhood planning efforts for Trolley Square/Sheridan Square and Inman Square, or the recent Jelley Petition). Over the last few years, CDD has also provided staff and technical assistance to help neighborhood groups develop overall goals in workshop settings. For example, in Central Square the department provided staff

support to the Central Square Committee over a two year period while working with consultants on the Central Square improvements. Currently, CDD is working closely with the Cambridge Street Advisory Committee to design streetscape improvements for the street from Inman Square to Lechmere. CDD also provides interested developers the names of contacts and groups in neighborhoods for the purpose of arranging neighborhood meetings around specific proposed projects, such as the Cambridge Research Park project proposed for Kendall Square/East Cambridge.

The issue of how to improve outreach and involve a wider public in civic activities comes up frequently. The Community Development Department and other city departments are always open to new ideas about how to expand public involvement. Last spring, the North Mass. Ave. planning process successfully utilized large sandwich boards on Mass. Ave. as a way to reach the wider public. Both CDD and DPW heard many positive comments about the large boards, from the Council and the public, and will use them more frequently.

For the Citywide Growth Management process, now ongoing, we have also tried to experiment with new methods of outreach including:

- large ads in the *TAB* and *Chronicle* newspapers
- flyers sent home with some 8,000 schoolchildren
- flyers sent to all community groups with whom CDD has regular contact (some 4,000 names)
- posting on CDD web page, with interactive survey capability
- notification to business groups for their newsletters
- frequent announcement of meeting dates at other meetings and forums

It is important that city departments receive feedback on their outreach methods, so that we continue to use those that are effective and avoid unnecessary expenditures for things that are not reaching a wider public. One way we are getting this feedback is to ask attendees "How did you hear about this meeting?"

Finally, CDD maintains a list of all active neighborhood groups and we would encourage all interested voluntary organizations to contact CDD so that their presence is known and they can be informed of important meetings and events. CDD forwards this list to the City Clerk to be used for notification of city actions in their neighborhood, such as curb cut applications.

The Community Development Department welcomes direct suggestions regarding outreach and measures that would foster and strengthen voluntary neighborhood organizations. Please contact Stuart Dash, Director of Community Planning or Elaine Thorne, Planner, at 349-4600.



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300
FAX. 349-4307



8.

February 8, 1999

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 1, regarding a report on cost-effective measures to foster and strengthen voluntary neighborhood organizations, received from Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #8

Relative to AR #1, regarding a
report on cost-effective measures
to foster and strengthen voluntary
neighborhood organizations.

In City Council February 8, 1999

CHARTER RIGHT

BY Councillor Davis

Accept Report 2/22/99

PLACED ON FILE