

City of Cambridge

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, RULES

AND CLAIMS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor Jim Braude, Chair

Councillor Henrietta Davis

Vice Mayor David P. Maher

Councillor Michael A. Sullivan

Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.

In City Council March 19, 2001

Committee Report #8

In City Council April 2, 2001

Calendar Item #6

The Government Operations, Rules and Claims Committee conducted a public meeting on Wednesday, February 7, 2001 at eight o'clock and fifty minutes a.m. in the Ackermann Room, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, City Hall.

The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the City Council's goal setting process.

Present at the meeting were Councillor Braude, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Davis, Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, Lisa Peterson, Assistant to the City Manager, Beth Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Sandra Albano, Assistant to the City Council, Robert Miller, Facilitator/Trainer and Donna P. Lopez, Deputy City Clerk.

Councillor Braude opened the meeting and stated the purpose. He asked Ms. Roberta Miller, Facilitator/Trainer, to describe the difference between this goal setting process and the last goal setting process.

Ms. Miller stated that telephone surveys and mail surveys were used and nine community meetings were held. She stated that she would like to go through the areas used and look at the options. She asked if there were any thoughts on the issue of the telephone surveys. Councillor Braude stated that he felt the telephone surveys are a very valuable thing to do on a regular basis. There was not an opportunity to adequately integrate the results in the goal setting process. More lead-time is needed. Mr. Rossi stated that the validity of the surveys was great. Ms. Peterson stated that if the survey was done every two years it would be good. Councillor Davis stated that the mail and telephone surveys need to match. Councillor Braude stated that a timetable needs to be established. Lead-time needs to be available for the company to interpret the survey. This survey was a baseline, stated Councillor Davis. Mr. Rossi stated that in the year the survey is not conducted, money should be spent to review the document and make recommendations on how to strengthen the survey. Councillor Davis supported this plan. Councillor Braude stated pollsters should be brought into the process early. Follow-up and trending should also be reviewed. Councillor Davis stated that trending should be reviewed to see if it should be done every year or every two years. Councillor Braude stated that in several months he would schedule a meeting and invite pollsters to critique the process to see what should be done in the future. Ms. Miller stated that a lot of well-

run cities do this. Councillor Braude stated that the survey results were never published and made available to the press and the public. Mr. Rossi stated that he thought the results were on the city's web site. Councillor Davis stated that the Press could use this item as a lead story. Councillor Braude stated that the Public Information Officer should include this information in the City Newsletter.

The mailed surveys were mailed to all households, stated Ms. Miller. Councillor Braude stated that there were 2,500 returns (a 6-7% response rate). More coordination and more lead-time is needed as well as a follow-up procedure to ensure that more people respond. This date and the fact that the city is asking is important, he said. Ms. Miller stated that the second notice should be done through a press story with the use of many prompts. Ms. Miller stated that the results of surveys would be strengthened if the city develops a predictable pattern. Three to four surveys conducted will result in more returns. Organizations are getting their people to fill out the surveys. Councillor Davis stated that the city could get overwhelmed by public interest groups. The purpose of mail surveys, she said, was to hear from people the city does not regularly hear from and these voices can get lost. The city needs to evaluate how it can get the maximum households to fill out the survey. Councillor Davis stated that an effort needs to be made to reach the new people who come to Cambridge. Ms. Peterson asked what would newcomers to Cambridge be surveyed on. Councillor Davis stated that the most important thing she learned was how little people know about the School Department. This fact, she said, alarmed her more than surprised her. Mr. Rossi stated that people who do not have children do not know about the School Department. When people come to Cambridge today, this is a serious decision. Councillor Davis further stated that people who do not have children in school and are taxed heavily get no information on schools - this is the issue. Ms. Miller stated that this is an outreach strategy. Councillor Braude stated that the survey results came late in the process. A meeting should be held to review the results and evaluate the data calmly, without the time pressure of the past year.

Ms. Peterson stated that the telephone survey should stay constant. People who work with the city were not happy with the written instrument, she said. She would like a better job done. Ms. Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, stated that how the information is disseminated to the city staff needs to be reviewed.

Ms. Miller asked about the results of the e-mail. Ms. Peterson responded that 280 responses were received.

Ms. Miller stated that nine community meetings were held; six neighborhood, three special meetings which took place at CRLS, the Senior Center and one with the business community. Councillor Braude stated that the community meetings were good, if not scientific, and the three special meetings were good outreach. The meeting at CRLS was the best, he said. Through these meetings, the city gets a feel that you do not get from a piece of paper. Councillor Davis stated her objections to the unscientific totals. Ms. Miller asked Councillor Davis if she wanted the senior citizen and the business community members in the aggregate. Councillor Davis responded in the affirmative.

The surveys are a better scientific representation of what people are thinking, she said. Ms. Miller stated that the business community numbers were not aggregated in the total. Councillor Braude stated that the issue is to look at the neighborhood and the constituency. Mr. Rossi stated that the issue should be to look across the range of issues rather than the numbers in the total. Mr. Rossi stated that a lot was learned at these meetings.

Councillor Braude stated that Ms. Miller worked well with the city staff to increase confidence. He asked if city staff could be identified to do this work internally. The reviews received were positive, but the City Council needs to be weaned off Ms. Miller little by little and focus this work on the city staff. Ms. Miller stated that four to six meetings is a good move. She felt that the three special meetings were more powerful for a different reason. The elderly meeting had a strong attendance because there was an aerobics class that was cancelled and the seniors were already at the Senior Center. The students were in school for the High School session because school was in session. The business community was asked to speak and they were dying to do so.

Neighborhood meetings need to be reviewed to converge with people who are gathering. Ms. Miller felt that she needed to be more clear with the role that the people who attended regularly could partake. It should have been a process where the same person can vote only once in the whole process. Analysis needs to be done on what the data is telling us. The aggregate data needs to be reviewed. The one mistake that was made was that at the Morse meeting, the recorded information on one sheet was lost.

Councillor Davis submitted the following motion:

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the people and to the staff when the data is received.

This, she said, is a step in the process that needs to be added.

Ms. Miller stated analysis needs to be evaluated and assessed. This part of the process needs more work. A narrative needs to be done, she said. Councillor Davis suggested that this could be a student project. Ms. Miller stated that Ms. Amy Squires would do this job and she attended the meetings.

Councillor Braude stated the following:

- Data needs to be looked at; and
- Written analysis needs to be done based on the survey and the community meetings.

He also stated that before the data is lost and while it is relevant, it would be good to take a second look at the data soon.

Councillor Davis stated that it does not have to be a scientific response. She suggested letting the raw data stand on its own. She suggested having a roundtable meeting on how to foster community goals and identity.

At the conclusion of the meeting the options suggested by Ms. Miller were as follows:

- Newspaper survey - Response was poor and advertisement was expensive;
- Online option - More important when Web site is used by more individuals;
- Organizational community meetings - Foster community around community and groups timed when people are used to getting together;
- Have an exit poll at the point of elections - Gives good information on how to run your community. Set up a table at all polling places and have every person fill out a survey after they vote.

Mr. Rossi stated that this needs to be checked with the Secretary of State to see if this is permissible. Councillor Braude inquired of the legality of contacting a person within 150 feet of an election needs to be reviewed and stated that if legal, it had to be when voters were leaving, not entering, the polls. Ms. Peterson stated that the logistics need to be worked out. She stated that the issue of which election, municipal or presidential, needs to be decided. Councillor Davis stated that the municipal election is more vital. Ms. Miller stated that the presidential election draws more of a crowd.

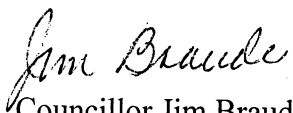
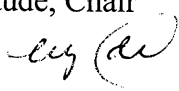
- Internal capacity issues

Ms. Rubenstein stated that the city has the capacity. The city needs lead-time and needs to train people.

Mr. Rossi stated that a rare person is needed because it can be confrontational. Councillor Braude stated that there are people who live in the city who would like to volunteer time to the city, such as city staff, residents, religious or civic leaders. Councillor Braude stated that the election issue needs to proceed on a fast track.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

For the Committee,


Councillor Jim Braude, Chair


Attachment: dates of planning, neighborhood, community and Government Operations Committee meetings.

010207.GovOperRulesandClaims

FY 2002 CITY COUNCIL GOAL-SETTING SCHEDULE

Planning meetings – Government Operations Committee

June 21, 2000

July 31, 2000

Survey mailed to all households – October, 2000

Statistically valid telephone survey of 400 Cambridge households – October, 2000

Neighborhood meetings – facilitated meetings sponsored by Government Operations Committee, attended by almost all members of the City Council. Residents present established their priorities.

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November 21 and December 7, 2000 Government Operations Committee meetings to finalize goals

December 18, 2000 FY 2002 Goals adopted by the City Council



City of Cambridge

O-17.

IN CITY COUNCIL

April 2, 2001

COUNCILLOR DAVIS

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the people who attended the neighborhood meetings held as part of the City Council goalsetting process and to the staff when the written analysis is done on data based on the survey and the community meetings.

In City Council April 2, 2001.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Margaret Drury". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the word "ATTEST:-".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

SEE CALENDAR ITEM #6

and made available to the press and the public. Mr. Rossi stated that he thought the results were on the city's web site. Councillor Davis stated that the Press could use this item as a lead story. Councillor Braude stated that the Public Information Officer should include this information in the City Newsletter.

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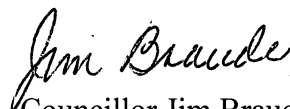
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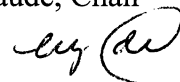
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Committee Report #8

Committee Report from Councillor
Jim Braude, Chair of the
Government Operations, Rules and
Claims Committee for a meeting
held on February 7, 2001 to
evaluate the City Council's goal
setting process.

In City Council March 19, 2001

*Charter Right exercised
by Councillor Davis
for City Council
April 2, 2001
Report Accepted*

PLACED ON FILE

ORDER ADOPTED