

City of Cambridge

The Economic Development, Training and Employment Committee held a public meeting on May 28, 1997, beginning at 6:15 p.m. in The Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of discussing the proposed Economic Development Policy for the City, with particular emphasis on employment and workforce development.

Present at the hearing were Anthony Galluccio, Chair of Committee; Councillor Henrietta Davis; Councillor Michael A. Sullivan; Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.; Councillor Katherine Triantafillou; and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were School Committee members Alfred Fantini and Alice Turkel; Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi; Assistant City Managers Susan Schlesinger, Community Development, and Jill Herold, Human Services; Deputy Director of Human Services Ellen Semonoff; Jeanne Strain, Director of Economic Development, Community Development Department; Jack Mills, Director of the Office of Workforce Development, Human Services Department; Arnold Clayton and Ted Martin, Co-Chairs of the Restructuring Office, Cambridge Rindge & Latin School; and Maria Ferri, Apprenticeship Specialist, Cambridge Rindge & Latin School.

Councillor Galluccio convened the hearing and explained the purpose. He requested that Susan Schlesinger begin the presentation. Ms. Schlesinger introduced the panelists, Arnold Clayton, Jack Mills, Jeanne Strain, and Maria Ferri.

Ms. Schlesinger provided background on the changing job base in Cambridge. She stressed the importance of maintaining Cambridge's competitive advantage of a well-educated and well-trained workforce. Ms. Schlesinger noted the area of mismatches in the resident workforce and the Cambridge job market identified by the report. One is training for kids who are not going on to college; the other is keeping mid-sized businesses in Cambridge; they provide significant employment opportunities.

Ms. Schlesinger then introduced Jeanne Strain. Ms. Strain stated that there are 105,000 jobs in the Cambridge economy, nearly twice as many jobs as working residents. The unemployment rate is 1.9%, which is considered a full employment economy. Half the population is of working age. One half of the working age population lives and works in Cambridge. These are all strengths. However, the change from an industrial manufacturing economy to a high tech economy has meant that the availability of jobs for mid-skilled employees has decreased significantly. Ms. Strain added that another issue is the concentration of small businesses, when larger businesses have more employment opportunities.

Ms. Strain noted that policy goal related to employment: sustain an economy which maintains a diverse array of employment opportunities that are readily accessed by well-trained Cambridge resident workers. She noted that there are three objectives for this goal, to promote diversification of the job base, cultivate a well-prepared resident workforce and improve linkages between Cambridge residents and employment opportunities created by large development projects.

Ms. Schlesinger then introduced Jack Mills, Director of the Office of Workforce Development (OWD). Mr. Mills stated that it is crucial to connect workforce development with education. He provided examples of some current linkages in this area. For example, the Office of Workforce Development has been using the Community Development Department's list of businesses to call for summer job opportunities.

Mr. Mills stated that the Office of Workforce Development has two customers, employers and citizens of Cambridge. What employers say that they want in Cambridge is very similar to what is presented in national reports. Employers want basic skills of writing, reading and math, creative and analytic skills, and personal skills of self management, integrity and reliability. Going on from the basics, employers stress the additional competencies of understanding systems and working with technology.

Mr. Mills stated that from the residents' perspective, there is increased insecurity regarding employment. The average adult changes jobs five times. The population of working poor need the skills to be able to obtain upgraded jobs. Efforts to meet these needs are vital. The good news is that the number is relatively small; it is possible to customize programs to meet their needs.

Mr. Mills noted the importance of developing systems for lifelong learning, through a system of agencies. He highlighted the Career Pathways Program, the Bunker Hill expansion, integration of the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment, collaborative relationships and re-invigoration of the Cambridge Employment Program.

Mr. Mills then described the Office of Workforce Development's deep involvement with the schools and introduced Maria Ferri to discuss the schools. Ms. Ferri said that she is a teacher at Cambridge Rindge & Latin School and is the apprenticeship specialist. These programs are offered to juniors and seniors for one year. They get quality work experiences. Two afternoons a week there are seminars at the workplace taught by CRLS teachers and utilizing resources from the workplace. Cambridge is seen as a leader in this area, and was invited to the White House for the signing celebration of the School to Work Bill. The Cambridge Schools are doing work on connections with elementary schools; elementary teachers are doing interesting work with careers/communities.

Councillor Anthony Galluccio asked how many students are in the apprenticeship program. Ms. Ferri responded that there are seven or eight.

Mr. Clayton, Co-Coordinator of the restructuring process at Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School stated that an exciting element of restructuring has been working with the Office of Workforce Development and the business community. He described the curriculum changes and advisory program changes that will support enhanced employability. There will be a serious career exploration as part of the advisory program. The new graduation requirements are more stringent and will require computer proficiency and a technical arts course.

Mr. Mills then summarized the Office of Workforce Development's work for adults. A crucial role for the Office of Workforce Development is to develop a system for provision of services. He noted free activities: The Bunker Hill Community College at CRLS; Cambridge Employment together with Career Resource. The hope is to design customized training in collaboration with employers and to combine resources to be able to serve small employers who do not have the time or the resources to do it themselves.

Councillor Galluccio urged inclusion of as many specifics as possible in the Economic Development Policy. He noted that he sees categories of goals: one is to focus on the businesses with over 100 employees. He also wants to look at communicating appreciation and fostering stronger relationships at businesses like Polaroid, Genzyme and Stride Rite. He said that City Councillors themselves need to work in building these relationships.

Councillor Galluccio stated that the key is tapping into the light manufacturing that comes from high tech companies. How do we do that?

With regard to the preparedness of Cambridge residents for employment, Councillor Galluccio suggested more input from the Human Services Department. Goals could relate to the Youth Centers. For example, these centers could require attending an interview workshop as a pre-requisite to membership.

Councillor Galluccio stated that he is very excited about the restructuring work at the high school. He suggested development of a technological advisory committee that include schools, businesses and the city. Businesses should include Biotech, computer tech, and environmental technologies. Councillor Galluccio said that places like Minuteman are training people from all over to come get Cambridge jobs. Only 5% of jobs requiring one year of technical training in Cambridge are held by residents.

Councillor Galluccio stated that he sees a third important concentration on connections with business in job fairs, first source agreement, etc. The policy should contain more details on how exactly the job will get done.

Councillor Henrietta Davis stated that the effort at creating coordination and collaboration is very important. She noted that there is no business sector representative on the panel. She added that there is also a need to work on the "perception" issue to increase confidence in the schools by getting out the message about the successes of the schools.

Councillor Davis stated that she is concerned about the low numbers of students involved in internships and asked how it can be increased.

Ms. Ferri said that there are many businesses that are willing to be involved; the issue is staff and staff development. She is working with an aging faculty and trying to get them interested.

Mr. Clayton agreed with the importance of staff development. He said that the new staff development approach and the eleven concentrations in the restructuring plan for the high school will facilitate this.

Councillor Davis noted that Mr. Alfred Fantini, School Committee members, has been a strong advocate of workforce development. She asked Mr. Clayton where restructuring stands. Mr. Clayton stated that implementation is beginning. The ninth grade will have new graduation requirements, a new advisory committee, and new technology competency requirements. Mr. Mills agreed that the new advisory program will provide an excellent platform for coordinating workforce development.

Councillor Davis asked about the technology mis-match. Ms. Ferri stated that the kids get much more exposure to state of the art computer equipment and software in their work placement than at school.

Councillor Galluccio noted that the competition in the telecommunication field may provide opportunities for benefits to the schools.

Mr. Clayton said that he would welcome sharing equipment and facilities with the City, so that at night school equipment could be used for community learning.

Jack Mills stated that there are ongoing technology improvements, for example, work is underway to network the personal computer lab at CRLS.

Councillor Davis suggested that this committee take a leadership role in technology development and coordination to make sure it is there for the kids and continuing discussions with the rest of the community in the evening.

Councillor Galluccio then invited comment from members of the School Committee.

Ms. Alice Turkel, School Committee member, stated that she wants to support Councillor Galluccio's desire for an exciting first rate technical program. She said that one way to be able to use joint funds for technology is to recognize that they can be used by the whole community.

Mr. Alfred Fantini, School Committee members, thanked the Office of Workforce Development for its cooperation, especially in its role in the development of Bunker Hill Community College. He said that all schools will be wired by next September. The schools could do better on equipment but it is often a choice of staff vs. equipment and Cambridge tends to choose staff.

Mr. Fantini added that loss of the business department through combination with RSTA may have decreased the effective demand for computers. Perhaps that decision should be revisited. The School Committee had developed good collaborations with the universities and now has plans to develop its relationships with businesses. Mr. Fantini continued that research shows that too much work for students is detrimental. We have to make sure that kids' work is meaningful, that they are not just being used by retail and restaurants. He supported the idea of a Joint Committee, made up of the Economic Development Committee and School Committee Technology Advisory Committee to work with businesses.

Councillor Davis said that most of the discussion tonight is about a common foundation for all kids, which includes workforce readiness. A very good high school education, including academics, is important for all kids. Separating kids off early may be problematic.

Councillor Galluccio agreed that this is important. He said that he wants to respect School Committee expertise. He sees a role for the Council in bringing the business community and additional community resources into the process.

Councillor Galluccio invited public comment.

Matt Merasola, Human Resources Manager, Genetics Institute, stated that he sits on the Business Council Advisory Board of the Office of Workforce Development. Many employees who live elsewhere but work in Cambridge conduct their personal business here. Genetics Institute has no factory jobs, and does not employ high school graduates with one year certificates. Genetics Institute does employ a lot of teens and they have seen dramatic effects on the lives of these teens. He described Genetics Institute's collaboration with the Fitzgerald elementary school, in which Genetic Institute's employees are exposing third graders to science. Kids get a passion about science early in elementary school. Genetics Institute believes in being good corporate citizens and does it with more than just money. Genetics Institute is a value-based company. Mr. Merasola said that Genetics Institute is always revisiting the decision of where it is located. They tend to hire kids from Minuteman, but not for the bulk of the jobs. Genetics Institute recruits for the bulk need - Four year degrees and excitement about math and science. He stressed the necessity of up-to-date computer education, and teacher staff development in the computer area.

Councillor Galluccio question how many employees work for Genetics Institute. Mr. Merasola said that there are 1200 who work, half of that number in Cambridge. Genetics Institute develops, produces and sells Production, which is in Andover.

Gerald Oldach, President, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, stated that one of the most important ways for businesses to work with the City and the schools is through the Business Advisory Committee of the Chamber of Commerce. The CEO's of large businesses are very involved in this community, often through their representatives.

Ms. Denise Maguire, resident, Executive Director of Cambridge Family and Childrens Services, stated that she is a resident and an employer of 30 professional staff and 70 occasional and part-time workers. The mission of her agency is to assist its clients to achieve the highest level of independence possible, and that is very dependent on employment opportunities. Ms. Maguire said that she is excited about the possibility of using the high school for technology education of adults.

Councillor Katherine Triantafillou noted that Cambridge is home to many non-profit agencies, and it is important to include them in this thinking and planning.

John O'Connor, CEO, Greenworks, stated that Greenworks is a "business incubator" which takes ideas and tries to turn them into companies. Environmental technologies have created 55,000 jobs in Massachusetts. He submitted a Greenworks report entitled "The Massachusetts Green Jobs Report, How to Create 100,000 Jobs While Cleaning the Environment." Mr. O'Connor urged the city to look at the job creation potential of environmental technology. He said that internationally the markets are growing 2-3 times the markets here in Massachusetts. This is a growth area that Cambridge should look at. Mr. O'Connor added that one problem is that environmental technology is that it is not a unified center. The objective is to make all products in a safer, healthier way. He suggested taking an inventory of existing businesses and technologies.

Councillor Galluccio thanked all those present for their attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

For the Committee,

Anthony Galluccio
Councillor Anthony Galluccio
Chair

A report was received from Councillor Anthony Galluccio, Chair of the Economic Development, Training and Employment Committee, for a meeting held on May 28, 1997 for the purpose of discussing the proposed Economic Development Policy for the City, with particular emphasis on employment and workforce development.

In City Council June 23, 1997

*Report Accepted
Placed on file*