



City of Cambridge

Department of Human Service Programs

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February 23, 1993

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services

Subject: Council Order # 28, dated 1/25/93, RE: Status of homeless in Cambridge, Supplemental Report

The magnitude of problems surrounding homelessness is clearly beyond the scope of municipal government acting alone. Federal and state efforts to address the problems have waxed and waned over the years, depending upon the general economy and the preferences of the administrations in office. The National Coalition for the Homeless recently released a study on rising shelter demand. All nineteen of the states in the study reported significant increases in shelter demand, particularly among families, since the recession began. Longer shelter stays were noted in many states, as well as an increase in the number of persons turned away from shelters.

The City of Cambridge has provided information to both the National League of Cities and the U. S. Conference of Mayors in efforts to increase Community Development Block Grant funding, which is particularly appropriate to address the affordable housing issues which play a substantial role in homelessness. Community Development staff are also involved with the National Community Development Association, which engages in similar efforts. The City could take an increasingly active role in bringing conditions surrounding homelessness to the attention of our own legislators at both the federal and state levels, with respect to CDBG, HOME and other programs.

McKinney Emergency Shelter Grant funding for Cambridge decreased from \$72,000 in FY93 to \$46,000 in FY94, as a result of federal priority shifts away from emergency shelter to transitional and permanent housing. While the change mirrors efforts of local providers to address homelessness in more lasting ways, it fails to address the fact that demand for emergency shelter and related services continues to increase. The City should support the bill to restore full ESG funding, introduced as a supplemental appropriation by Representative Bruce Vento of St. Paul, although some sources believe passage is unlikely.

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

Many service provider coalitions in the Commonwealth are trying to convince state legislators that the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, formerly the 707 program, should have funding restorations rather than the additional \$12.5 million in cuts being proposed by the Weld administration. These cuts would be effected by not reissuing vouchers to new recipients after a given family is no longer utilizing the certificate, and by lowering income eligibility from 200% to 175% of the poverty level, which would eliminate 500-600 families statewide. Community Development Department staff are working with CHAPA (Citizens' Housing and Planning Association) and the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute in this effort, and are gathering data on the number of Cambridge tenants who would be affected by proposed decreases. It is critical to get this information to the Cambridge delegation, particularly Speaker Flaherty. Allied groups in this effort include the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, the Greater Boston Adult Shelter Alliance and the housing authorities.

As noted in the report presented to the City Council on February 22, the Salvation Army reports that it is forced to turn away 50-60 men per week. The Department of Public Welfare currently funds 35 beds at the Salvation Army, which provides another 15 beds without additional funding. The Salvation Army would like the City's support in approaching the state to fund these 15 beds. This would not be an increase in capacity, however, since these beds are already operating without financial resources from Welfare.

In response to a City staff approach, the Cambridge YWCA has indicated a willingness to participate in discussions with the York Street Shelter and the City to possibly make a small number of beds available for transitional purposes. Because it already houses a number of disparate populations with a high need for supportive services, the YWCA does not feel that it could offer true emergency beds, but it may be feasible to work out a cooperative arrangement among local providers which could balance emergency and transitional beds available within the system. As with the Salvation Army, City support in approaching the Department of Public Welfare for funding would be very helpful. It is probable that the Multi-Service Center staff could provide the casework services for transitional clients at the YWCA, should funding be made available for the rooms.

It should be noted that our previous reporting that the Hildebrand Family Self-Help Center provides shelter for 10 families was in error. Hildebrand's sheltering capacity is now 14 families, including the Columbia and the Bishop Allen sites. In addition, the agency operates 20 scattered-site apartments, mostly in Boston, under a state contract to provide alternatives to shelter. There are also five families in St. Paul Homes.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

March 1, 1993

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 31, regarding a supplemental report on the status of the homeless, received from Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, relative to this matter.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

Consent Agenda # 4

S-10A

Awaiting Report Item Number 31, regarding
a supplemental report on the status of
homeless in Cambridge.

*See City Manager Requests
1993 # 20 for original
order dated 1/25/93*

*Rep. rec. 2/22/93 - See Agenda
8 of 2/22/93*

In City Council,

March 1, 1993

Placed on file