

Bread and Justice Food Programs/C.E.O.C.

11 Inman Street • Cambridge, MA 02139 • (617) 868-2900

October 30, 1992

Mayor Kenneth Reeves
Robert Healy, City Manager
Members of the Council Hunger Committee
Members of the Cambridge City Council
City Clerk,

RE: Implementation of the Hunger Referendum/Food Accessibility

Nearly two years have passed since the introduction of the Cambridge Food Policy Initiative. One year ago, the voters of Cambridge passed the Cambridge Food Policy ballot question. THE MAJOR THRUST OF THIS QUESTION WAS TO MEET THE HUNGER CRISIS THROUGH NON-CHARITABLE MEANS! Providing affordable, accessible food through NORMAL outlets was a priority.

This brings me to the subject of the future of Stop and Shop stores in Cambridge. It is indeed distressing to hear of the closing of the Fresh Pond Stop and Shop store, and to also know of the mounting opposition to the Stop and Shop store on Memorial Drive because issues such as noise and traffic cannot be mitigated.

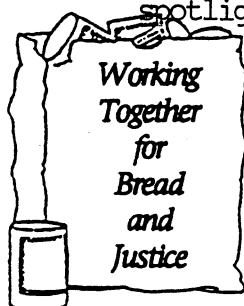
We are facing, to some degree, a crisis for those who will no longer have access to affordable food and who will be losing their jobs as a result of the closing of major grocery stores.

As you know, the ballot question which passed one year ago, called for an examination of overall city development and city policy for its impact on the availability of food to neighborhoods and individuals through non-emergency food sources, and recognition that people's access to safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food must be a PRIORITY in overall city development and policy.

Frankly, this thrust of the hunger policy has been virtually ignored. The city is continually caught off balance and is on the defensive when it comes to maintaining and improving access to affordable food and the jobs that food retail provide. I note with reasonable cynicism the appropriation of \$100,000 for 10 slots to train high school graduates for technical support jobs in biotech labs, whether or not the jobs will be there and without guarantees of hiring Cambridge residents at any time.

What about the lack of trained, qualified workers in new, technical and management positions evolving in today's supermarket environment. This lacks the glitz and glitter of biotech as we rush for the attention of the public spotlight.

pg.1



- Empower people in need
- Advocate for new laws and regulations that will help hungry people
- Expand public awareness of hunger and its root causes
- Feed the hungry

We have long suffered from an economic development staff and management that has cared nothing for the infrastructure of jobs and service access that are vital to low-income and working people. Major office development, glitzy biotech, whatever might pave the way of future employment of economic development staff in the private sector after leaving Cambridge has been the tradition for the past dozen years.

What has Cambridge done, and what are we willing to do about:

- 1) the high operating expenses of stores, including labor costs, rent/land costs, utility costs, security, access, transportation of shoppers and employees;
- 2) depressed economic conditions in certain retail malls such as Fresh Pond, where the whole mall development must be seen as an economic development entity;
- 3) limited understanding of economic and customer potential
- 4) limiting community distrust and a sense of powerlessness on the part of residents when faced with retail store development while taking leadership to mediate issues and insist on store development on an ongoing basis;
- 5) the lack of trained, qualified workforce in new, technical and management positions evolving in today's supermarket environment;
- 6) red tape and the lack of coordination of bureaucratic assistance which hinder food retailers, while at the same time empowering Cambridge residents to mitigate the effects of development and ensure that Cambridge residents will be hired for Cambridge jobs;
- 7) creating a climate of investment of all types of retail stores;
- 8) providing assurances to potential and actual businesses through appropriate City and other public agencies of needed services or programs including security for businesses, shoppers, employees and vendors; public transportation; job training for employees from the community streamlining/permitting and licensing procedures while protecting the needs of neighborhoods and assistance with financing and earned tax credits.

If the city of Cambridge, its elected and employed managers had taken the ballot question passed one year ago seriously, I believe that we would not now be facing this current crisis of food accessibility and job loss presented by Stop and Shop.

I am offering my assistance in whatever capacity to ensure that retail grocery outlets remain and locate in Cambridge, thereby offering accessible, affordable food and jobs for Cambridge residents.

I believe that a task force should be developed immediately to discuss the issues which I have raised and which were raised in public meetings and the ballot question. I would be happy to serve on such a committee.

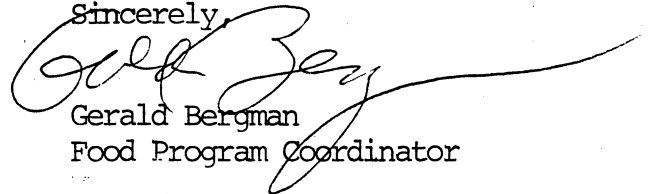
I also suggest that major grocery chains be contacted (for example, Ken Goode, of Purity Supreme, Dir. of Public Relations, who knows Cambridge) to find out about their interest in Fresh Pond and other sites. Of course, we should have developed an economic development package related to retail food stores.

I am again offering my assistance on the task force working on affordable accessible food, and feel that we must and can move quickly to ensure that low-income and working people will not suffer from a loss of this food outlet, and that Cambridge jobs in the supermarket business can be a reality.

I would hope that this question could be taken up by the Council and vigorously discussed at the earliest opportunity. Please inform me of any task forces, commissions or meetings regarding this subject and any action being contemplated at the City Council, City Manager or Economic development level.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gerald Bergman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gerald Bergman
Food Program Coordinator

Consent Comm. # 14

S-878

Comm. from Gerald Bergman, Food Program Coordinator, Bread and Justice Food Programs/CEOC, regarding the future of Stop and Shop stores in Cambridge and the implementation of the Hunger Referendum issue.

In City Council,

November 2, 1992

*Referred to the
Hunger Committee
copy sent to Hunger
Committee 11/4/92.*