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CDA, INC.

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"Citizen Participation in the Model Cities Program"

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May 7, 1973

Honorable Henry Owens, Chairman
Cambridge City Council Revenue Sharing Committee
and Members of the City Council
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mr. Owens and City Councillors:

Please be advised that the Revenue Sharing Committee of Model Cities wishes to go on record in support of any appropriate mechanism which will guarantee maximum citizen participation in the disbursement of revenue sharing monies. However, the following points of information we feel should be brought to your attention at this time prior to the establishment of any formal body for the realization of such:

1. As presently constituted, the bill for Community Development Revenue Sharing proposes to allocate funds under a hold harmless formula which takes into account the annual \$1.523 million awarded Model Cities. These funds will thus have to be spread even thinner; when in the Model Cities Area they but minimally impact the physical and social problems of Areas 3 and 4. In point of fact during the first year of Revenue Sharing the funds which were to have been awarded Model Cities for its fifth and final action year will now not be available to Areas 3 and 4 unless appropriate local action is taken. In Boston Mayor White is holding already received general revenue sharing monies in escrow until the impact of federal cutbacks is fully known.
2. The Model Cities citizen participation body, CDA, Inc., presently is under contract with the City of Cambridge to recommend to the City Council a viable means for city-wide resident participation for Community Development and other revenue sharing proposals.

Under the timetable now in effect we are obliged to present for Council's consideration, a preliminary plan during June and July.

The following is taken from our present agreement:

"REVENUE SHARING. In anticipation of the eventual passage of Community Development Revenue Sharing and such other programs which will replace or supplement federal categorical aid, the Board shall research, develop and implement strategies to expand citizen participation on a city-wide basis and thus effect the continuation of such other city-based organizations, the Board shall seek to develop cooperative techniques to determine the composition of a viable city-wide Revenue Sharing Committee, and to set deadlines for planned implementation of said Committee to include formal presentation to the Cambridge City Council for recognition and approval."

3. The presently proposed federal legislation does not go far enough in providing for citizen participation. The weakness of the following excerpt is only too evident to anyone living in Cambridge where participatory politics is the mainstay of government.

"In order to permit public examination and appraisal of community development projects and activities proposed to be carried out with shared revenues, to enhance the public accountability of recipients of funds and to facilitate coordination of activities with different levels of government, at least 60 days prior to preparation of a final statement, a proposed statement shall be published in such manner to afford the citizens of such State or unit of general local government a reasonable opportunity to examine its content and to submit comments on the proposed statement. In preparing the final statement, the recipient shall consider any such comments and may, if deemed appropriate by the recipient, modify the proposed statement. The final statement shall be made available to the public, and a copy shall be furnished to the Secretary (and, in the case of any recipient unit of general local government, to the Governor of the State in which it is located as well) together with a certification that the recipient is in full compliance with the publication requirements of this subsection as well as the other provisions of the Act."

On the local level a literal adherence to the law will not in and of itself fulfill the participatory spirit of government. In implementing item (7), Section 4 Community Development Activities Eligible For Assistance, ". . . the provision of community services which the recipient determines are necessary to achieve its community development objectives," a much more comprehensive participation will be required if Cambridge is to continue giving more than but token commitment to involving its citizenry in governmental decision making.

4. A recently released evaluation of the Model Cities program as revised under the Planned Variation demonstration program for 20 U. S. cities points to the need for thorough planning and understanding prior to city-wide expansion of the Model Cities concept. While no New England cities were included by President Nixon for participation in the demonstration, Cambridge has informally participated through adoption of the CERC variation, one of three provided for under the program.

Chief Executive Review and Comment (CERC). The local chief executive representing the local general purpose government is given stronger coordinating powers through the right to review and comment on all applications for Federal assistance affecting the community.

In announcing the implementation of Planned Variations, Secretary George Romney stated:

"The Model Cities program was designed to demonstrate improved ways in which general purpose city governments could bring better living conditions to its citizens. While much has been learned from the Model Cities process during the past few years, evaluations of program experience suggest that program modifications will strengthen local capacity in dealing with urban problems. Cities selected to participate in Planned Variations will be developing and testing procedures which can guide other communities as they reorient their governmental processes to handle the new Community Development Program and other revenue sharing resources.:

The Office of Community Development evaluation states in its findings:

"The development of a city-wide citizen structure to deal with Planned Variations is an important step toward the involvement of citizen groups in special revenue sharing. To the extent that cities are developing or have developed city-wide strategies and priorities, the citizen groups will be experienced in the kinds of sharing process, and their participation in that process will be enhanced.

Under separate communication you will be receiving a recently completed study by the Model Cities Administration on the impact of Federal cutbacks. After reading this preliminary study, undertaken at the City Manager's request, you are sure to see the enormity of the task ahead for all concerned persons in Cambridge. Obviously, cities such as ours, which were able to attract Federal funds, stand to suffer disproportionately.

Given the above, we would hope that you would communicate with us in a timely manner so that we do not proceed on exclusive pathways seeking to solve what is basically the same concern. We hope

that we can coordinate our efforts to the betterment of life for all the citizens of Cambridge.

Thank you for your cooperation. We look forward to meeting with you at any appropriate time in the near future.

Sincerely,

Helen C. Meehan

Helen Meehan, Chairlady
Revenue Sharing Committee

Frank Fraumeni

Frank Fraumeni
Chairman, Model Cities Board
President, CDA, Inc.

cc: Herald American
Cambridge Chronicle

Comm. from Helen C. Meehan, Chairlady
of Revenue Sharing Comm. and Frank Framei,
Chairman of the Model Cities Board of
the ODA supporting the concept of maximum
citizen participation in the disbursement
of Revenue Sharing monies with the further
request for participation in the decision
making process with the City Council
sub-committee on Revenue Sharing.

In City Council,

May 14, 1973

5/21/73

Referred to

Rev. Planning
Committee