

City of Cambridge

The Civil and Human Rights Committee held a public meeting on June 15, 1994, beginning at 5:06 p.m. in the ante chamber to the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of setting the Committee's agenda.

Present at the meeting were Councillor Katherine Triantafillou, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury.

Councillor Triantafillou convened the meeting and explained the purpose. She noted that since the purpose of the meeting is to set an agenda for the committee, she sent notice to many organizations in the civil rights community. She requested input from those present as to other groups and persons who should be notified of future committee meetings.

Councillor Triantafillou then invited comments from those in attendance.

Jan Puibello, Lavender Alliance, said that the issue of the agenda for the Civil Rights Committee was discussed at a meeting of a subcommittee of the Lavender Alliance. One of the concerns was the anti-immigrant feeling across the country. They would like to see Cambridge take a stand on this issue.

She also expressed the desire to have a positive campaign for Cambridge's diversity, for example, T.V., ads, etc., highlighting the diversity of Cambridge in a positive way. She said that at the Lavender Alliance subcommittee meeting, there was also concern about defacing the sign about the Gay Pride breakfast on City Hall lawn. She added that there was also interest in having an annual summit on the state of human rights in Cambridge.

Councillor Triantafillou asked for more discussion of the idea of a "summit."

Ms. Puibello said that it would allow those working in the field to get together and discuss the issues and all the work being done in a positive light, and it could give people the opportunity to hear about the variety of work that is ongoing.

Councillor Born asked about the circumstances surrounding the defacing of the sign on the City Hall lawn. Jan Puibello said it happened twice, and City Hall responded quickly to try to fix it. It is an example of all the negative feelings that do exist, even though Cambridge considers itself to be very supportive of diversity.

Ms. Puibello said she would consult with the larger group of the Lavender Alliance and report back on any additional suggestions.

Councillor Triantafillou asked for comments from Margot Kosberg, Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission. Ms. Kosberg explained the work of the Commission and its staff. Complaints that would otherwise go to MCAD or EOCO can be heard by the Commission, and are referred back by MCAD and EOCO. Many other people come into the Commission with complaints of discrimination. Many are immigrants.

Ms. Kosberg added that she is also Chairman of the Fair Housing Committee, which was recently formed and is in the process of setting its agenda. She said that she is very committed to doing outreach. This year the Commission put on a forum about hate crimes and hate speech, because of the issues raised by Central Square speakers. She would like to see the Commission be willing to take on projects.

Councillor Sullivan asked what kind of projects she would like to see happen.

Ms. Kosberg described a California project involving the school, entitled "Walk in My Shoes," which brought many diverse groups together and gave children a opportunity to experience diverse situations. She said that she is very committed to working with schools. She described the Fair Housing Month poster and essay contest. Ms. Kosberg added that she would like to develop a sexual harassment video, using Cambridge employees to produce the video.

Councillor Triantafillou asked whether the Commission focuses mostly on housing. Ms. Kosberg said there are actually more employment cases. Generally, employment cases comes from MCAD. The Commission can decide which cases it wants to deal with. They do not take City of Cambridge employee cases; however, there is an informal grievance procedure for City employees. Councillor Triantafillou asked for a copy of these procedures.

Ms. Kosberg said that the volume of cases is about 100 per year. She has law students working on investigations and she also does investigations. Her staff person, Heidi Arnao, works mostly on housing cases because they are quite complicated. The largest group of housing cases tend to be the source of income cases.

Ms. Kosberg said that the other issue she is working on is the issue of gender equity. She submitted a memorandum on gender equity in athletics. (Attachment A)

Ms. Nancy Ryan, Director of the Womens Commission, said that technically the City is in compliance with Title IX. However, there is a paper by Cara Frey, a Harvard student who is a nationally ranked woman baseball player who has recently completed a

study of this issue in Cambridge, using informal interviews. She found a universal perception that girls get fewer resources and less respect. Boys and girls both said this. In addition, girls are not given information about college scholarships for athletics.

Councillor Born said that this issue came up at the Health & Nutrition Subcommittee of the Health of the City Committee.

Ms. Ryan said that there was a discussion about the use of school gyms for basketball before school and whether girls would participate.

Ms. Ryan noted that studies have shown that a common insult to boys is that they play like girls.

Councillor Born said that just by looking at the Cambridge fields on any given day, you will see many more boys' teams.

Ms. Kosberg said that one of the problems is that there are fewer intramural teams for girls.

Councillor Born said that Prop 2 1/2 stopped all elementary intramural sports and they are just starting to come back.

Councillor Triantafillou asked what was going to be done with Cara Frey's report. Ms. Ryan said it had been sent to all members of the School Committee. Ms. Kosberg said that the plans are to hold a forum at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School in the fall. Ms. Ryan said that there are some differences in opinions as to the nature of the forums. She wants to get the issues on the table and to pinpoint problems. She noted that the School Department has made great efforts to preserve a legal equality, but there are still fundamental problems that need to be addressed. Ms. Kosberg said that no one comes to the girls' basketball games.

Councillor Sullivan said that he has seen cable casts of the girls' basketball team games.

Ms. Ryan said that she had observed a video in which the boys who were taping and commenting made fun of the girls playing throughout the video.

Mr. Carter, Heritage Center, Human Rights Commission, gave examples of human rights problems. One example was a young dark-skinned woman, a graduate of Cambridge

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Rindge and Latin School who applied for a job as a hostess for a restaurant and a supermarket. She was refused the restaurant job. She was hired as a cashier and let go after one week as not being qualified enough. He went recently to the Star Market on Beacon Street and at the time he was there, he did not observe one black employee. Black visibility needs to be raised, and there should be testing to determine where there is discrimination.

Councillor Sullivan noted that that market is in Somerville.

Councillor Triantafillou asked what he meant by testing, whether the Human Rights Commission should be conducting some "sting" operations. Mr. Carter said that there is an ethnic iron curtain in Cambridge, and it should be looked into.

Councillor Triantafillou asked if he thought the issue was more one of a class or of color. Mr. Carter said that employers are more afraid of color.

Councillor Triantafillou asked whether he had had any contact with the Chamber of Commerce about these issues. He answered that he had not. He added that his grandfather was born in Cambridge.

Silvia Saavedra-Keber, Latino Commission, said that she like the idea of a forum. Working with the Unity and Justice Commission last year, it became clear that there should be some consideration and consideration of the different areas, so that the different groups can talk to each other.

Regarding the Latino Commission and issues affecting the Latino community, she agrees with Mr. Carter's concerns about the education that the Cambridge Rindge & Latin kids have received. There are kids graduating from the bilingual programs who cannot read or write English. Guidance counselors have case loads of 150-180 kids. However, this is a very complicated issue. She would like to see a way for citizens to bring positive assistance and contribution.

Councillor Sullivan noted that there are kids who graduate who cannot read or write in any language.

Ms. Saavedra-Keber said that regarding employment, there is an issue of women and minorities in high positions in the City. She was a member of the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, but she left because it was not doing enough. She does not believe that the Affirmative Action Office is doing what needs to be done, but this is not something that should be left to one individual. There must be support a high levels.

Ms. Ryan suggested affirmative action training for department heads. She noted that Jane Edwards was hired to do this training several years ago, and it was very successful.

Ms. Saavedra-Keber said it must go further than training. The question is how to make the hires happen. This is not one Latino in any position of visibility in the entire City, even though Latinos are 10% of the population.

Councillor Triantafyllou asked Ms. Saavedra-Keber's opinion of the reasons for this. Ms. Saavedra-Keber said that there must be commitment of the top management that this is what will happen.

Ms. Ryan said each department was issued goals.

Councillor Born asked whether minorities were put in different categories, bumped up on account of affirmative action.

Councillor Sullivan noted that the City Affirmative Action Officer does not have high visibility in the City.

Councillor Sullivan suggested a joint meeting with the School Committee on the issue of gender equity. He added that guidance counselors were cut because of Prop. 2 1/2 cutbacks. The School Department is working on that.

Councillor Sullivan noted that the "Night Out" event is used by other places such as Dorchester as a major source of information about civil rights.

Ms. Ryan said that Somerville has a good advertising campaign that celebrates diversity with bumper stickers and posters. The message is anti-discrimination and pro-community. Because Cambridge has become so much of the new bilingual community in the past 10 years, some focus on welcome and community integration might be good. She believes it is done through the Somerville Human Services Department.

Councillor Triantafyllou thanked those present for their attendance. She summarized the priority suggestions she had heard:

- a forum on civil rights activities;
- the human rights gender equality, particularly in school athletics;
- and,
- affirmative action.

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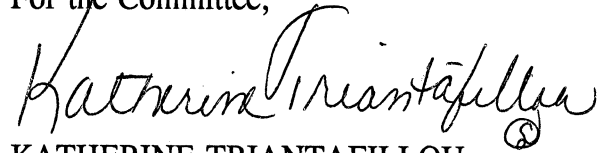
She said perhaps they could have another Committee meeting and invite for City's Affirmative Action Officer to discuss affirmative action prior to August.

Ms. Hoffman said these issues have been raised in the past by the Civic Unity Committee. She suggested the committee contact Denise Simmons for her comments on that. There is also the Unity and Justice Commission, which issued a report last year that should be looked at. She also suggested looking at the issue of anti-Semitism and contacting the Rabbi of the New Temple and the Holocaust Commission.

Mr. Carter suggested adding minority church ministers to the mailing list.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

For the Committee,


KATHERINE TRIANTAFILLOU

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TO: School Committee's Sub-Committee on Athletics, Physical
Education and Health

FROM: Margot P. Kosberg
Executive Director, Cambridge Human Rights Commission

RE: Gender Equity in Athletics

Gender equity is the hot issue of the 90's. As the head of our city's civil rights law enforcement agency, the Cambridge Human Rights Commission, it is very clear to me that one of the major building blocks of discrimination is prejudice, and that prejudice starts early in life. Prejudice is a learned response. Too often, our society sends out a message that girls are not equal. Too often, our schools send out this message. It can be demonstrated by observing the differences in the treatment of girls and boys in schools. Unfortunately, the field of athletics plays a crucial role in building prejudice against girls. There is no question that girls and boys have very different experiences in the field of athletics within our schools. There is no question that boys greatly benefit from athletics through increased self-esteem, confidence, and frequently college scholarships. There is no question that far fewer girls receive these benefits. I wanted to learn why and to explore what could be done to change the role of girls in athletics.

Over the last number of months, I have had the opportunity to meet with Ruth Ricker of the federal Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Education, Regina Caines, Affirmative Action Officer for the School Department, Nancy Ryan, Executive Director of the Women's Commission, Lynn Yeamans, Athletic Director at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, and Cara Frey, Student Intern for the Women's Commission, to discuss the issue of gender equity in athletics in the Cambridge School system. As Cara summarized in her report, the three dominant issues discussed were:

- 1) the lack of women coaches and its effect upon female athletes;
- 2) the lack of visibility of women's sports and its subsequent impact on participation by female students;
- 3) the lack of all around support for female athletes.

The first issue, lack of women coaches, goes to the issue of role models. Studies have shown that girls participate more when coached by members of the same sex. At Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, only three female teams are coached by women. Girls need to see women in positions of authority in the athletic arena. Left to chance, the number of female coaches will not increase. Men have gotten the message that playing sports and coaching is a benefit. Male teachers, far more than women teachers, are likely

to have participated in sports and coaching during their growing up years and in college.

What can be done to remedy this? A priority must be set for increasing the number of women coaches. In a sense, an affirmative action approach must be taken. It is my understanding that current teachers are first given the opportunity to coach. For certain sports, it may be possible to develop coaching workshops and recruit current female teachers to participate in these workshops, as the first step in getting them to actually coach. For other more technical sports, it may be necessary both to recruit women who are not current teachers, and place a greater emphasis on coaching skills when hiring new teachers.

The second issue, lack of visibility of female sports, begins with the problem of acknowledging, that in our society, we worship athletes as role models. The problem, of course, is that there are no major league female teams, and ergo, our heroes are men. The boys who compete in school have these male role models to look up to and attempt to emulate. While out of school sports leagues are now open to boys and girls, in practice, girls' experiences differ significantly. The emphasis on participating, competing, and winning, is different for boys and girls. Boys are routinely encouraged and expected to participate. Girls must frequently be their own self-motivators.

What can be done? As Cara Frey's study indicates, in order to be successful in high school, it is imperative that girls participate in sports, developing their skills and self-confidence at an early age. The importance of girl's participation must be acknowledged by the school system. It must also be recognized that girls must be actively encouraged to participate; that affirmative steps must be taken to ensure that all girls feel welcome. Our after school programs must make a conscious effort to include girls in their athletic activities. Our schools must look at new ways of increasing girls' participation. What this means is that girls and boys can no longer be treated in the same manner. Boys are given all kinds of signals in our society encouraging them athletically. Girls are not. This must be acknowledged. There cannot be just one approach to getting children to participate in athletics, as the one approach is the boy's approach, which has not worked for girls. We must innovate and find those methodologies that get results.

The third issue, lack of support for female athletes, concerns the belief among many of the female students, that support in the schools is unbalanced, and that they are shortchanged. Cara Frey's study specifically cites travel, clothing, attendance at events, publicity surrounding events, academic help, and scholarship assistance which differ greatly between the boys and the girls.

Not only do fewer girls participate in sports, but when they do participate, they perceive themselves as receiving less support than the boy athletes.

What can be done? The school system needs to make a concerted effort to equalize the support between girls and boys teams. Why should girl's games go unattended while boy's games have crowds attending? The change in support needs to start from the top down. Teachers and administrators need to be encouraged to attend girls sporting activities. Rallies need to be held for girls teams as well as boys teams. Publicity must be equalized. Girls must be allocated the same resources for clothing and travel as the boys. If the school system is unable to acquire another van, then girls and boys teams must take turns equally. Girls should not be treated as second class citizens regardless of the success of their athletic endeavors. If tutoring is offered for boy athletes, it must be offered equally to girls. If scholarship assistance is offered to boy athletes, that same information must be provided to girls. If boys have new and coordinated uniforms, girls must as well. First and foremost, there must be a commitment on the part of the school department to begin to equalize athletics for boys and girls.

In summary, we must begin with an attitude change. We must acknowledge that athletics for girls and boys are treated differently, and we must begin to make amends. We must make a conscious effort to equalize athletic opportunities for girls and boys. We cannot rely on the same methodologies used on boys for increasing participation by girls. We must acknowledge that there are differences between the two groups, many of which have been created by the different way society treats the two groups. But we must be committed to moving beyond the differences so that gender equity in athletics becomes a reality.

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

S-317

Civil and Human Rights Committee regarding
the formulation of an agenda for the committee
for the upcoming year.

In City Council,

June 27, 1994

*Report accepted
and placed on
file*