

CAMBRIDGE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE, INC.
99 AUSTIN STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Members of the Cambridge City Council
FROM: William A. Bauman, Executive Director, C.E.O.C.
SUBJECT: Surplus Food Distribution Program

During the past four years the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee has in several different capacities been directly involved in the problems of the elderly and low income families in this city. This involvement continues in ongoing program efforts to meet their needs for jobs, housing, education, and health services.

The experience we have had, the facts we have uncovered, and the conditions that have been known to all of us support our conviction that hunger and malnutrition are a reality in the lives of all too many residents of Cambridge. It is our experience that malnutrition exists among many of our elderly and low income families, and that actual hunger is not uncommon. Moreover, the present efforts of a number of agencies, including CEOC, to deal with this critical need are inadequate. The condition afflicts those who live in

economic destitution, and their hardship has increased as a consequence of the economic inflation we are now experiencing.

Although CEOC does not now have an operating program to deal with hunger and malnutrition on anywhere near the scale that it actually exists, we have dealt with some aspects of the problem in a number of our program efforts. The Housing Assistance Program developed and publicized information on the extent of economic deprivation among the elderly through a survey. The data collected from a survey of 2,061 residents over 65 living in private housing shows that 63% have annual incomes below \$1,500, although only 15% of these were receiving welfare assistance. Ninety-three percent have incomes below \$3,000. Fifty-seven percent of those who rent their own apartments pay more than one-half of their income for rent. When this information is analyzed on the basis of an estimated total population of 13,000 elderly in Cambridge, it is evident that substantial numbers of older people cannot afford the basic necessities of food, clothing, and medicine.

Increased public awareness of the conditions afflicting many of our elderly citizens has engaged substantial

numbers of citizens as well as public and private agencies in developing and implementing programs in health, housing, and social services that will meet these needs.

The Child Development Program, although primarily an educational enrichment program, includes health and welfare services as an element in its approach to the problems of low income families. Some of these services are brought directly to bear on the problem of malnutrition. As a part of the everyday classroom experience each child in the program receives a nutritionally balanced meal. These meals are provided for out of program funds and are distributed at each classroom. The Head Start program has also used the services of a Home Economist to provide families with assistance in food selection and preparation to insure a balanced diet in the home. Last Spring the Home Economist, in cooperation with the Middlesex County Extension Service, developed a training program for nutrition aides who are available on a volunteer basis to support the expansion of the surplus food distribution program.

The Social Service Aide program has given CEOC some capability to bring existing resources to bear on a case by case basis where individuals and families are suffering from a lack of food. These personnel have provided assistance to individuals by (1) referring them to the Salvation

Army where immediate grants of twelve dollars can be obtained, (2) if the person and/or family is eligible for welfare assistance, the Social Service aide has made a referral to the Cambridge Public Welfare Department, (3) if the person was not eligible for welfare assistance, the Social Service aide has attempted to have the person receive general relief to provide temporary assistance, (4) if the person was not eligible for any welfare assistance but lacked adequate food for the household, the CEOC Home Economist has been assigned to provide individual therapeutic diet counseling, food management practices and income budgeting procedures.

Although these program resources had some impact on the problem it was obvious to us and to other agencies involved in this area that a coordinated expansion of the surplus food distribution program was called for. To this end we began discussions in the Spring of this year with the City Manager and the local Welfare Department to explore several possibilities. CEOC offered space in its neighborhood centers for the purpose of distributing surplus foods. It was the hope of those involved that the State would appropriate funds for the staff necessary to man the distribution centers. As Summer approached it became clear that the

State legislature was not prepared to do this. In the interim we explored the possibility of opening two centers over the Summer on a pilot basis utilizing volunteers. Because of the obvious problems involving transportation, supervision and certification of applicants that cannot be met with volunteer resources, this effort has resulted in only marginal success.

Since the financial resources to support the effort required were not forthcoming on a local or state level I met with OEO officials in New York to discuss the possibility that OEO nationally might be considering expanding funding for its emergency Food and Medical Services Program. The OEO staff in New York indicated that this was a distinct possibility though not a certainty. On this basis CEOC recruited a Drafting Committee with representation from the Committee of Elders and the Parent Advisory Committee of the Head Start Program to work with staff from the Cambridge Welfare Department and CEOC in developing an application to OEO for an expanding surplus food distribution program in Cambridge. A summary of their proposal is attached to this memorandum. We expect the proposal to be completed shortly, and we assume the CEOC Board of Directors will act to approve

it at its December 17 meeting. In that event we would welcome the opportunity to present it to the City Council at its meeting of December 21. There are two facts that the Council should be aware of regarding this proposal.

1. Because Congress has not yet acted on the OEO appropriation bill, the amount of money allocated nationally for Emergency Food Service has not yet been determined.

2. Even if the proposal is funded at the level of our request it will not completely cover all the costs of an adequate surplus food distribution program. For instance, the cost of transporting food to centers from a central distribution point cannot be supported with OEO funds. Therefore, the continued, cooperative efforts of the city and the Welfare Department will be required to support a successful distribution program.

ATTACHMENT

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Summary of the Proposal for an Emergency Surplus Food and Medical Program

The proposed program will involve a coordinated program combining the efforts and resources of CEOC, the Department of Public Welfare, and the City of Cambridge. The Department of Welfare receives surplus food from the Department of Agriculture. CEOC will provide (1) space in its neighborhood centers for distribution centers, (2) provide staff assistance and (3) coordinate responsibility. The City of Cambridge will provide (1) funds for manpower and transportation for the delivery of food from the warehouses to the distribution centers and (2) provide specialized staff assistance.

The objectives of the proposed Emergency Surplus Food and Medical Services Program are;

1. To,provide an increased number of distribution centers. This will mean and increase from two to six centers.
2. Ro provide special emergency delivery service to those persons with particular problems of health or transportation.
3. To provide an improved information service about the availability of programs and resources as well as improving outreach, recruitment and referral services.
4. The establishment of a medical assistance component designed to meet emergency medical and dietary needs.
5. The expansion of the Education Program to educate the community in the preparation of surplus foods, the preparation os surplus foods for persons with particular diet needs, and to provide consumer education programs in regards to price policies, food ptychasing, food management

The program activity for the proposed Emergency Surplus Food and Medical Program is focused on three main projects, (1) Commodity Distribution, (2) Education, (3) Emergency Medical/Dietary Services.

1. COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION

At the present time there is one distribution center and one Satellite Center. The Cambridge St. Surplus Food Center has been in operation since 1965. This facility is severely limited. Its major problem is that it is inaccessible for many residents. Although the center is functioning it will need considerable improvement in terms of staff, transportation procedures, education programs and emergency medical and dietary services. On November 1, 1969, a satellite center was opened at the Mary Merrick Center on Kinnaird St. It is fully staffed by volunteers and therefore provides only limited and temporary service. With the expansion of the program these centers will substantially benefit from the proposed reorganization and greater allocation of staff and program services. It is proposed that the number of centers be increased to a total of six serving the main target areas of low-income residents in Cambridge. Each distribution center will be staffed in a manner which will provide the necessary manpower, clerical, and service personnel to improve the program.

2. OUTREACH

Specific organization improvement will include personnel whose primary responsibility will be to carry out outreach and recruitment activity. Outreach activities will be a vital part of the program since one of the major problems is that available resources (surplus food programs, educational programs, and medical assistance programs) are often unknown to the residents. Outreach personnel will undertake the major responsibility to reach all needy residents, the entire

staff will be encouraged to assist, and other agencies concerned with poverty will be encouraged to use their services to aid the program. We will also implement a well planned information service using letters, flyers, newspaper articles, radio and television to improve communication of available programs and services.

3. TRANSPORTATION

Improved transportation and Emergency Delivery Service is one of the primary goals of the program. Many people are unable to pick up their surplus food due to poor health or a serious lack of transportation. It is proposed that the costs of transportation of the food to the Surplus Food Distribution Centers be provided by the City of Cambridge through its Department of Labor. The City of Cambridge has provided these services in the past and should continue with the expansion of the program. It is also proposed that an emergency delivery service systems be set up to provide those who are unable to pick up their surplus food commodities.

4. EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Education Program is vital to the overall success of the Emergency Surplus Food Program. Once the residents have received food commodities, special services have to be provided to ensure that the food can be put to good use. Surplus foods require special techniques of preparation. People with particular diet problems will need assistance in preparing food that will fit their needs. The preparation of food will also vary according to the cultural background of the participants. Since the surplus food will supplement the residents shopping, consumer education and nutrition education will be necessary. A Nutrition Education program will be set up, staffed by qualified

personnel, and in addition to education programs a Public Information Bulletin will be prepared and distributed.

3. MEDICAL/DIETARY SERVICES

The Medical/Dietary Services aspects of the proposed program are designed to provide emergency medical and dietary assistance to treat and/or refer persons with specific health problems related to hunger. It is proposed that the emergency medical services component be staffed with a nurse who can provide immediate aid and then refer patients who need additional care to other medical sources. Outreach workers will be trained to make observations on the condition of health so that they are able to make emergency referrals. It is further proposed that a special system of payments for medical services be set up to deal with the emergency situation and resources of the poor.

City of Cambridge

Councillor Crane

In City Council,

November 24, 1969.

ORDERED:-

That the City Council of Cambridge prefers the use of the food stamp program instead of the food surplus distribution program for the use of the Welfare recipients in the City of Cambridge, and be it further

ORDERED:-

That a copy of this order be transmitted to His Excellency, Governor Francis Sargent of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, informing him of the views of the City Council on this matter.

City Council Nov. 24, 1969

Adopted by the affirmative vote

of 9 members

Paul J. Healey
City Clerk

ORDER

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Council prefers use of food stamp
program instead of food surplus dis-
tribution program for Welfare recipi-
ents in Cambridge

November 24, 1969.

Mr. Crane.