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Ms. Jacqueline Clarke, Coordinator
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Mr. Robert Ziegler, M.D.
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Dept. of Child Psychiatry
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Ms. Mirembe Asamoah, Student
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Ms. Gail Enman, Executive Director
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Ms. Kathleen Born, City Councillor
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Ms. Nancy Danforth, Prob. Officer
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Mr. William Bates, Assistant Dir.
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Councillor Michael A. Sullivan
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Mr. William Timmons
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Mr. Kenneth Barnes
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Ms. Barbara Ackermann, Member
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Ms. Carol Cerf, Member
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Ms. Henrietta Davis, Member
Cambridge School Committee
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Cambridge, MA 02139

Mr. Steven Brion-Meisels, Program Mgr.
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Councillor Katherine Triantafillou
Cambridge City Council
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City of Cambridge

The Human Services and Youth Committee held a public meeting on June 8, 1994, beginning at 5:00 p.m in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of considering issues related to alcohol education and alcoholism with a focus on issues involving youth. Present at the hearing were Vice Mayor Sheila T. Russell, Chair of the Committee; Councillor Kathleen L. Born; Councillor Francis H. Duehay; Councillor Jonathan S. Myers; Councillor Michael A. Sullivan; Councillor Katherine Triantafillou; and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury.

Vice Mayor Russell convened the hearing and explained the purpose. She said the discussion would focus on the services and the gaps that exist in the services. Vice Mayor Russell introduced Hilma Untermeyer, Cambridge Human Services Commission, and explained that she would serve as moderator.

Ms. Untermeyer asked all of those present to introduce themselves and then called on Ms. Jacqueline Clarke to begin the discussion. A list of those in attendance is attached as Attachment A.

Ms. Jacqueline Clarke, of Cambridge Substance Abuse Task Force, described its work connected with youth. From the first, The Task Force has worked to include youth. A mass media literacy project was done in conjunction with Cambridge Community Television. In 1992 and 1994 the Task Force sponsored a teen health survey. From the survey, it was learned that there is a strong need for intervention.

Ms. Clarke said that recently the Task Force sponsored a city-wide youth conference in conjunction with several other agencies and programs including the Department of Human Services, CASPAR and Leading Edge. The conference dealt with many issues. Over 100 youth came. The results will be submitted to the City Council in a few weeks.

She added that the Task Force has always included youth in its planning meetings, and encourages other community groups to look at youth as resources. Ms. Clarke said that in terms of gaps, there is a need for more outreach to parents.

Vice Mayor Russell asked whether youth worked with them over the summer. Ms. Clarke said that youth do work with them. She noted that the Task Force has to be careful to do prevention work rather than direct services.

Councillor Duehay asked if the Task Force had written objectives and evaluations available. Ms. Clarke answered that this information is available.

Ms. Hilma Untermeyer then introduced Bob Goodwin, Program Director, Cambridge Youth Program, Department of Human Services. He said that gaps in service include ways to focus on the dealing of crack cocaine by youth. He noted that 60-70% of inmates in prison throughout the U.S. have some exposure to drugs. He said that we are seeing some crack dealing by Cambridge kids. CASPAR has been very helpful in training staff in identification and referral. The emphasis must be focused on the drug dealing.

Councillor Myers asked Mr. Goodwin to identify the ages for crack use. Mr. Goodwin said that he sees 14-16 year old kids dealing, but 12-14 year olds are also being recruited to help out in spotting. The dealing takes place out on the streets, not in the center, but kids in the center may go out and buy or sell.

Ms. Henrietta Davis, School Committee Member, said that in her time on the School Committee alcohol has been the drug that has caused kids the most trouble.

Mr. Goodwin stated that alcohol is much easier for kids to get. He also noted the family issue of kids in alcoholic families becoming alcohol users at early ages.

Vice Mayor Russell said that alcohol was the original focus of the problem, and she added that the roots of other drug use often go back to alcohol. She asked Bob Goodwin whether he gets the cooperation he needs from the police. Mr. Goodwin said that the collaboration with the Police Department has been very strong and needs to continue.

Vice Mayor Russell asked whether any one area had much higher usage of drugs and alcohol. Bob Goodwin said at this time it is spread throughout the city.

Councillor Duehay noted a report in today's newspaper about an alarming rate of alcohol use by college kids. He asked Bob Goodwin for recommendations on how the community could help. Bob Goodwin said that increasing recreation opportunities helps. Also helpful are the programs run by CASPAR, by schools, the programs involving reports back from inmates, and in general giving kids all the information possible about the consequences and effects of alcohol and drug use.

Ms. Hilma Untermeyer asked Joe Grassi, School Committee Member and Youth Specialist, for his comments. He described the programs available. The CASPAR program at Gately Shelter has been very valuable and has been replicated in other youth centers.

It can be geared toward groups that are in need at that time. It is a small group approach and develops trust while it provides education. Joe Grassi said that the Globe report on college kids shows a trend toward binge drinking that is also seen in teens. He noted the connection of violent crime to binge drinking (more than five drinks at one time). Mr. Grassi said there is a need to be much more pro-active. Drugs cannot be dealt with just as a police issue. In addition, the public must be educated as to the need for substance abuse programs. Mr. Grassi also said that substance abuse exists in every neighborhood. When a great deal of attention was focused on Neighborhood Four, the drug activity didn't go away; it moved to other neighborhoods. Regarding crack cocaine, in his experience, 14 and 15 year olds are experimenting with it. There is also a high instance of marijuana and alcohol use.

Joe Grassi suggested that the License Commission continue its work to prevent sales of alcoholic to underage persons.

Councillor Born asked what is being done in grammar schools about alcohol education. She cited an instance of a party for eighth graders where there was alcohol use. Henrietta Davis said that the health curriculum touches that subject. She has not heard about any eight grade drinking parties.

Councillor Duehay said that the teen health survey should be made available to anyone interested. He said he would like to know more about the content of the CASPAR program operating in the teen centers and of the school health curriculum.

Carol Cerf said that she would like to know whether there are programs to educate parents.

Councillor Myers asked Bob Goodwin about the distinction between 14 to 18 year olds distributing and using crack cocaine. Bob Goodwin said the older youth are using the younger kids to sell. A much smaller percentage of kids use the drug. They are mostly selling to adults on streets like Rindge Avenue and Western Avenue.

Hilma Untermeyer asked the high school students present to speak.

Miremba Asamoah of Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, said that the biggest problem is that drinking is glorified on T.V. Regarding drugs, it is important to understand the other side. A teenager with a mother on welfare who has to do for herself is not going to work for MacDonald's for \$4.00 an hour when he or she can make as much as they want in one night of selling drugs.

She said that marijuana is a different issue. It is a product that has been used for many years; it can be grown in the earth by anyone. It is just the start of more serious drugs. There are a lot of drugs out there that every teen encounters.

Lydia Lestage, C.R.L.S. said that it is kind of funny and sad that the people in this room are so clueless about what is going on in the community. There is a lack of communication between youth and adults.

Merembe Asamoah said that the CASPAR program was very useful. After going through it, she became a peer leader.

Jackie Clarke said that all the Substance Abuse Task Force can do is talk and make a referral. They are not counselors and don't do direct services.

Barbara Ackermann asked the C.R.L.S. students whether they had classmates who had parents with alcohol/drug problems and whether any help was available.

Merembe Asamoah said that the problem does exist but that she didn't know where kids can go to get help.

Steven Brion-Meisels, School Department, asked the C.R.L.S. students what the school should be doing. Melissa Jackson said there should be more drug and alcohol education on the pros and cons.

Howard Wolfe, Caspar Alcohol and Drug Education Program, asked how young kids start drinking alcohol. All three C.R.L.S. students reported that experimentation starts at age nine or ten, and drinking starts in the seventh and eighth grades, and by high school, for many kids it is the thing to do.

Howard Wolfe asked how nine year olds get alcohol. Melissa Jackson said nine year olds get it from the parents' supply. Older kids get adults to buy for them. Marijuana is simple to get. Lydia Lestage added that it all ties into the adults. Adults are giving or selling it to youth.

Carol Cerf asked whether the teen health center is useful when they need to talk. Mireembe Asamoah explained that someone she knows in the community would be more comfortable for her to talk to. She said that the kids who are not straight A students, who are perceived as troublemakers, do not receive the support they need at the teen health center.

Joe Grassi asked what adults in Cambridge can do about the prevailing culture. Melissa Jackson said that adults need to open their eyes, realize it could be their kid. Merembe Asamoah said that programs like the CASPAR program should be supported; there needs to be more money for police program, and most of all, there needs to be more communication between adults and youth. There should be more communication than just three teens at this meeting.

Hilma Untermeyer called on Rosemarie McMahan, Coordinator for Cambridge Services for CASPAR. Ms. McMahan said that CASPAR does not feel that it is doing enough. The problem of alcohol and drug abuse among youth is bigger than youth. Nine out of ten adults drink, one of ten who drink will develop the disease of alcoholism.

CASPAR provides programs at the teen center, and has a person who works 16 hours at C.R.L.S. CASPAR also provides consultation to the elementary schools and also has someone at the courthouse. Ms. McMahan said that she has worked in the adolescent substance abuse program at one high school.

Ms. McMahan explained that kids who break the drug and alcohol policy at the school have to come to the group to stay at school. Thus they come reluctantly at first. She explained that CASPAR'S philosophy is that it provides information so people can make choices. Through the process the participants develop trust for the leaders. She read excerpts written by two youths after they had attended for several weeks. In terms of gaps, she said more money for more services is needed.

Ms. Gail Enman, Executive Director, CASPAR, noted that Rosie McMahan needs space for her program and asked her to discuss this need. Ms. McMahan said that the program does not have a location in Cambridge. Cambridge kids won't come to Somerville, so the program does a lot of running back and forth to temporary locations.

Councillor Duehay asked what the long term effects of the program on kids were, for example, five years later and whether there were written descriptions and evaluations of the program. Ms. Ruth Davis, Program Director, CASPAR, described the evaluation program, which contains both formal and informal evaluation activities. Some of the work Rosie McMahan has described was done under a grant which involved process and outcome evaluations.

Vice Mayor Russell asked what other cities were involved in the grant. Ruth Davis said that for Woburn, Winchester, Burlington, Wilmington, Somerville and Cambridge, there was some funding for intervention.

Hilma Untermeyer then introduced Bill Timmons, Transition Program, C.R.L.S. He explained that the program is housed at Just-A-Start. Kids are admitted for many reasons including non-compliance with school regulations. He sees on a daily basis the effects of substance abuse, such as low motivation and inability to set longterm goals. In past years they have had a CASPAR biweekly group. More money is needed in terms of counseling and intervention. There will be some ERI funding next year for counseling, but mostly for vocational counseling.

Vice Mayor Russell asked whether more education for younger grades would help. Bill Timmons said the earlier, the better, especially with the CASPAR model, which provides the possibility of referring kids for more help out of the group.

Councillor Duehay said that he believes the panel needs some sort of a report from the School Department on how well the new health curriculum is working. In addition the committee needs more knowledge as to what programs exist and how they interact with the youth centers.

Bill Bates, School Department, described the health curriculum. He noted that the fifth stage of the curriculum is evaluation, and that is the stage that will be entered next year. He agreed that evaluation is a critical part of the program.

Ruth Davis, CASPAR, also stressed the importance of evaluation. She added that there is no perfect answer. This is a massive problem that has a tremendous impact on our children and the community.

Ms. Davis added that in the past five years, much has been done in the area of education in Cambridge. Still, alcohol continues to be the number one problem of our young people. She noted research that has shown that 14% of eighth graders have had five or more drinks at a time and 28% of twelfth graders have had five or more drinks at time, i.e, binge drinking episodes. Ms. Davis stressed the interrelation of alcohol with many other teen problems.

Ms. Davis said there is a need for a comprehensive approach with a systematic look as what is there and what is missing. She noted that some of the programs described are ending. She encouraged a look at the continuum of services from education to treatment.

Councillor Duehay asked whether greater coordination of substance abuse issues could lead to better results. Ms. Davis said there should be coordination along with an evaluation of what is there that works.

Councillor Duehay asked why this coordination is not being done. Ruth Davis said that part of the reason is one complexity of the problems, the funding comes down categorically for problems that cannot be categorized.

Councillor Duehay noted that at the federal level, a drug czar was appointed, and asked how the issue of coordination can be addressed. Ms. Ruth Davis pointed out that the federal drug czar has the responsibility to coordinate fifteen agencies, but no authority over them. That system does not work well.

Gail Enman, Executive Director of CASPAR, said that a very big problem is that the nature of the funding dictates the activities, and does not always include the services that are most needed. It is still necessary to apply for the funds, to do what they can do, but there is a real frustration about the services that are needed but not funded.

Steven Brion-Meisels said that something similar to what was done for youth violence (Leading Edge) would be useful. He also noted that prevention is the hardest thing to evaluate.

Mr. Gil Sakakeeny, Assistant Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Cambridge District Court, provided statistics on drug and alcohol use and its relation to crime. He said that 80 % of Cambridge's 15.2 year old youth in his program admit to alcohol and drug problems and that 87% of the youth who commit crimes against persons admit to alcohol and drug problems. He added that there has been a tremendous increase in violent crimes from 18% in 1989 to 33% in 1993. Over the years he has seen the kids he first saw as care and prevention cases come back as adult offenders and then later as parents of abused and neglected kids.

Councillor Born noted the distinction between rehabilitation and prevention and the fact that there is no magic solution. She said she agreed with the intergenerational aspect of the problem. Until we start to do something in the schools to devalue high-living materialistic behavior, we won't make significant progress. It is a big societal issue. She added that perhaps Cambridge shouldn't allow films to be made in Cambridge that show violence or drug use. Councillor Born added that is not just an education issue; it is a sensitivity issue.

Ruth Davis said that the solutions are not either/or. We need to find a way to address the full range of issues from billboards to education. Her hope is that there can be a dialogue that thinks in a new way about how to respond to the problem.

Councillor Born pointed out that Cambridge has one of the highest number of bars in Massachusetts.

Robert Ziegler, Department of Child Psychiatry, Cambridge Hospital, said that it is important to try to help the families that have sunk, the situation described by Gil Sakakeeny.

Vice Mayor Russell thanked those who participated and said that she would like to see a task force to address these issues.

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She asked anyone interested in serving on the task force to contact her or Hilma Untermeyer.

The hearing was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

For the Committee

Sheila T. Russell (DM)

Vice Mayor Sheila T. Russell, Chair

2.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

5-316

Human Services and Youth Committee Report
regarding issues related to alcohol education
and alcoholism with a focus on issues involving
youth.

In City Council,

June 27, 1994

*Report accepted
and placed on file*