

The questions for discussion were as follows:

1. What issues are you currently involved in or working on that are relevant to this committee;
2. What issues, initiative or support of current work should this committee of the Cambridge City Council be engaged in;
3. How should these issues be addressed - in what format/process...;
4. How do we create an ongoing working group of this committee; and
5. Who else needs to be at the next meeting - other groups not represented today.

In both groups, the discussion centered on the first and second questions, what issues are those present working on that relate to civic unity and suggestions for priorities for the committee. Responses were as follow

- ◆ Multicultural initiatives related to schools
- ◆ The MCAS high-stakes, standardized test
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Deadlocked dialogue on race and class
- ◆ Empowering parents with regard to the issues their kids face at school, for example, the school searches for which there has still not been closure
- ◆ Equity in the delivery of services in school settings
- ◆ Discrimination in the criminal justice system, particularly sentencing issues.
- ◆ ESL issues, especially in the schools where the grant that supported bilingual parent liaisons has ended.
- ◆ Fostering acceptance of affordable housing in all neighborhoods
- ◆ Loss of diversity in the city
- ◆ Need for an umbrella to bring all of the civic unity issues together
- ◆ Navigation mental health benefits system
- ◆ Forum for citizen discussion of these issues
- ◆ The digital divide
- ◆ What role can the business community play in enhancing the quality of life and building a better Cambridge?
- ◆ Combatting ignorance regarding people with disabilities
- ◆ Impact of welfare reform
- ◆ Combination of poverty, race and gender
- ◆ Fragile people with mental health problems losing housing through the ignorance of the community
- ◆ Follow up on recommendations from October forum on race and class
- ◆ Issues of diversity of race and class in city employees
- ◆ Keeping the sense of neighborhood

◆ Ongoing conversations about what makes Cambridge a great community

Councillor Decker thanked everyone for their participation in this discussion. She requested that the City Clerk arrange for the report from the Forum on Race and Class to be distributed to those present.

At this time Councillor Decker invited a general discussion on what the Committee could do to promote civic unity.

Nancy Ryan observed that over the past five years there have been some "signature events" - moments that crystallized and epitomized the divisions in our society. These events included the Rodney King beating, the Agassiz School conflict, and the crisis resulting from the school search of students who were predominantly kids of color. Ms. Ryan suggested that the committee members reflect on those moments and ask themselves how each would have liked a Civic Unity Committee to respond in those situations, either in terms of immediate response or public education.

Mr. Arnold Goldstein noted the importance of the question of what makes a community. He sees it as diversity. This committee is not yet diverse. The high-tech community and students are also needed. He suggested getting people from all the segments of the community to be part of the committee to diversify and broaden the committee.

Councillor Reeves noted Councillor Born's remarks last night at the September 25, 2000 City Council meeting about the new business in Cambridge being concerned about the global community, not the local community. He also remarked that although former Mayor Duehay's attempt in the last term to organize a city-wide discussion on race and class was not successful, the question that discussion posed, the question of "Who is my neighbor" was and is, in many ways, the essential question.

Kenneth Bowles stated that what makes a community is people making a commitment to a place and then finding the time to work side-by-side. One good thing about the increased home ownership that is occurring in Cambridge is that once people own property, they become much more committed.

Laura Booth noted that when tenants are threatened with rent increases, it is very destructive to the community.

Councillor Born stated that Mr. Bowles' view is the conventional view but she sees a new twist in that people have paid so very much for their homes they have the attitude "Well, I've got mine - no affordable housing - protect the investment."

Ms. Silverman suggested that perhaps landlords could be encouraged to pledge not to charge these high prices.

Councillor Decker asked for volunteers to help plan the next meeting. David Washington, Ken Bowles, Hilda Silverman, Cathy Hoffman and Nancy Ryan volunteered. She noted the resounding question of what is community and stated her belief that it is the

responsibility of long-time residents to knock on doors and meet their neighbors and make them aware of our community values.

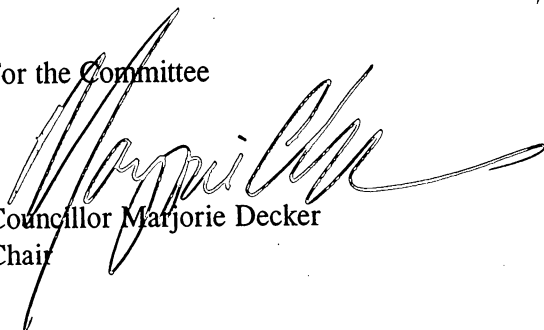
Councillor Reeves said that in the two-year council term, most of the work gets done this year. The committee needs to conclude what the mission is this year. The committee can do more than one thing. It would be wonderful to inspire and put on cable about ten dialogues among residents about what Cambridge is to them.

Nancy Ryan stated that the Women's Commission has received a grant to collect information for the new library's 1% art project which will focus on Women's History. The grant will finance collection of the stories of women over time. There will be four public meetings focusing on different groups, for example, immigrants and feminists, talking about their lives as women. She is open to collaboration with this committee if that would be useful.

Councillor Decker thanked all those present for their contributions. It was agreed that all present would personally recruit people they think should be involved with the committee to come to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

For the Committee


Councillor Marjorie Decker
Chair



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CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

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Civic Unity Committee

Council Members

Marjorie Decker, Chair

Ken Reeves

Kathy Born

Staff-Donna Lopez

Agenda

September 26, 2000

Welcome and Introductions (15 minutes)

Break-up groups (20 minutes)

1. What issues are you currently involved in or working on that are relevant to this committee;
2. What issues, initiatives or support of current work should this committee of the Cambridge City Council be engaged in;
3. How should these issues should be addressed-in what format/process....;
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5. Who else needs to be at the next meeting-other groups not represented today.

Report Back (20 minutes)

Prioritize (15 minutes)

Next Steps (10 minutes)

City of Cambridge

CIVIC UNITY

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor Marjorie C. Decker, Chair
Councillor Kathleen L. Born
Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves

In City Council October 16, 2000

The Civic Unity Committee held a public meeting on September 26, 2000 beginning at 5:53 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of discussing issues of public unity in the city and hearing recommendations from the public and city departments as to the role that the committee can take to support civic unity and as to any other issues relating to civic unity in the city.

Present at the meeting were Councillor Marjorie Decker, Chair, Councillor Kathleen Born, Councillor Kenneth Reeves and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

Also present were Kenneth Bowles, member of the Commission on Disabilities, Dwayne Brown, Affirmative Action Director, Cathy Hoffman, Executive Director of the Peace Commission, Els Knoppers, Deputy Director of Personnel and member of the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, Susan Ostrander, member of the Human Rights Commission, Nancy Ryan, Executive Director of the Women's Commission, Hilda Silverman, member of the Peace Commission, Quan Troc, Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission, Mary Wong, Executive Director of the Kids' Council, Laura Booth, CEOC, Elaine DesRosiers, Executive Director of CEOC, Arnold Goldstein, Vice President of the Central Square Business Association, and David Washington, 16 Chauncy Street Unit K, Staff psychologist, Mass General Hospital.

Councillor Decker convened the meeting and explained the purpose. She emphasized that this is a very initial meeting. The City Council, through its Civic Unity Committee and its predecessor, the Civil and Human Rights Committee, has always played an important role with regard to initiatives in the area of race, class and gender. She stressed her desire for a working committee of all of those interested in this issue.

Councillor Decker then invited her fellow committee members to comment.

Councillor Reeves noted the importance of this committee. In the last Council term the city could not have a dialogue on race and class. This year, so far, the Police Commissioner has written a letter stating that the Police Department cannot be involved in the discussion on racial profiling begin held by the Police Review and Advisory Board.

At this time Councillor Decker invited all those present to introduce themselves. She then distributed copies of an agenda for the meeting, Attachment A, and requested that those present divide into two groups to discuss the questions set out in the agenda and then report back to the full meeting.

Committee Report #3

A report from Councillor Decker,
Chair of the Civic Unity Committee
for a meeting held on September 26, 2000
to continue the discussion on the issues
of public unity in the city and hearing
recommendations from the public and city
departments as to the role that the
committee can take to support civic
unity and as to any other issues
relative to civic unity in the city.

In City Council October 16, 2000

Report Accepted.

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