

Citywide Community Council

Community Schools serve various populations in the City's many neighborhoods. Seniors, families, children and adults have created Community School programming to meet their needs in all of the Community Schools. This cut affects not only children, but it also deprives families, seniors and adults of their programs and the venue for them.

What will the hundreds of adults and seniors enrolled in these programs do? Where will they hold the programs?

WHEN? The decision to close two community school programs came quickly on the heels of the School Committee vote to accept the proposed school reorganization plan on April 8, 2003. In a letter dated April 10, 2003, Jill Herold and Ellen Semonoff informed the Community School Directors that two community schools would be closed.

There was no process before this announcement.

On April 9, 2003, (one day before Ms. Herold's letter) I received a telephone call from a DHSP staff person, calling me at the request of Jill Herold. I was asked if I would consider setting up a Citywide Community Council meeting to allow council members and parents to discuss the implications of the school closings. ***However, DHSP administration did not wait for me to begin the process before declaring the end of 2 of our 12 programs in their letter of April 10, 2003.***

Not one of the Neighborhood Councils was informed of the decision to close two programs, either before or after it was made and the letter sent.

No members of the community were invited to meet with City administrators to consider the fate of community schools, or how to sustain their programs for all members of the neighborhood.

No parents of children in the various community school programs were invited to meet with DHSP administrators to solicit their comments and hear their needs for Community School programs.

Child-Care Program:

However, I believe, meetings did take place with parents of children in the Child Care Program to discuss the impact of school closings on the program and possible solutions.

In those meetings with Graham & Parks parents of children in the After-School program, G&P parents clearly stated their interest in the program remaining in the neighborhood. The City Manager was very cooperative in responding to the wishes of these parents.
(See block at bottom of page 1.)

Citywide Community Council

BECAUSE?

Fact:

- The cost to the City per child enrolled in Community School Programs is approximately **\$859** per semester, which is the least amount the City spends per child in any out-of-school-time program.

Fact:

- The City has a reserve of over \$50 million and has three triple-A credit ratings. Why cut \$80,000 from the one program in the City that serves the most children when the City is obviously not short of cash?

Fact:

- Community Schools raise 36% of their budget from fees, thus bringing approximately \$460,000 to their annual budget. The amount raised is 5 times the amount being cut in this year's budget.

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Question: The Community School program costs the City the least of the all out-of-school-time programs. Is it being cut because the City can't afford it? The answer is obviously, NO! because: ↓

KIDS COUNCIL GOAL:

In accordance with the goal of the Kids Council, it pleases me to tell you that Community **Schools provide children and youth equal access to safe, stimulating, nurturing and healthful out-of-school time activities** ...and provides such activities to 1500 children per semester (and 900 in our summer camps. *There is no other City program that does that.*



↑↑ In view of the above, why cut the most successful and cheapest City out-of-school-time program, serving the largest number of children, that admirably meets the above-mentioned goal of the Kids Council?

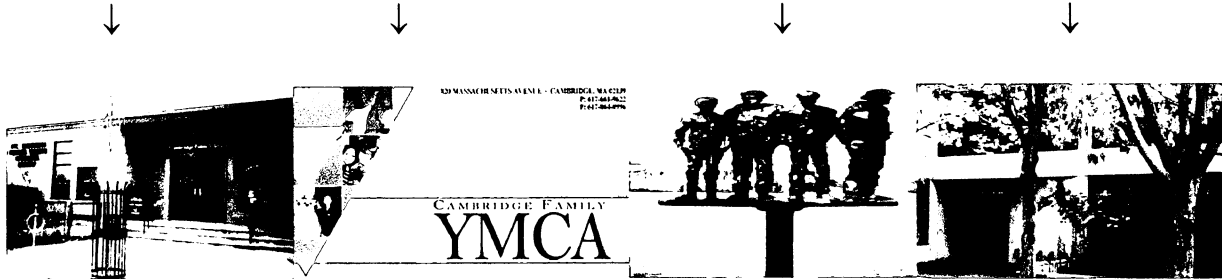
WHERE, OH, WHERE?

In the documentation setting up Neighborhood Councils and their program, Community Schools, discussion of where to house the Neighborhood Council programs did not specify any specific public building, but, in fact, considered venues such as churches or other appropriate spaces in each community, as well as the elementary schools.

Citywide Community Council

In fact, some community schools did set up their programming in the early days in buildings other than the City's public school buildings.

Some community schools hold a good portion of their programming in public parks, YMCA facilities, MDC facilities, libraries, church halls, youth centers, etc. Clearly, Community School programs are not limited by their lack of access to school buildings.



To name one program, the Longfellow Neighborhood Council conducts a large proportion of its family, adult, and community school programs outside of the Longfellow school building, for instance, in Sennott Park.

The Graham and Parks community school makes year-round use of the pool at the Central Square YMCA.

I am the Chairperson of the Citywide Community Council, which body is composed of the members and chairs of all the Neighborhood Councils in Cambridge. I thank you for your patience with this long, explanatory letter.

On behalf of the members of all Neighborhood Councils, I request a meeting with all or some of the elected official of Cambridge in order to discuss how we can save this valuable resource for families, children, seniors and adults. We hope for your understanding of our plight and would welcome an opportunity to tell your membership more about the scope and variety of our programs.

For your edification, I have attached a listing of how Community School programs address the goals and objectives of the City's Coordinating Council for Children, Youth and Families (the Kids Council), as well as a brief history of our budget struggles.

Yours truly,



Carolyn Shipley
Chairperson
Citywide Community Council

Attachment: Kids Council Objectives
and Community School Programs
Brief History of Community School Budgets

-4-

●●●Citywide Community Council c/o ●●●
Carolyn Shipley ●●● 15 Laurel Street ●●● Cambridge, MA 02139●●●

Citywide Community Council

Kids Council Objectives and Community School Programs

- To promote services and other activities that are preventive rather than reactive;

Neighborhood Councils and their Community Schools programs meet the generally accepted criteria for preventive programs for children and families, as well as for seniors.

- To promote services and other activities that are coordinated rather than fragmented, and that result in improved accessibility;

Neighborhood Councils and their Community Schools programs are tailored to the needs of their respective communities and are open to all.

- To encourage innovative responses to needs;

Neighborhood Councils and their Community Schools programs are designed by the members of their neighborhoods according to their unique needs.

- To generate activities that create opportunities for all children, their families, and other caregivers;

Neighborhood Councils and their Community Schools programs offer a varied program of activities for children and families throughout the year, including summer camp and school vacation and release-time-day activities.

- To support families, their choices, and their strengths, recognizing diversity and the many different choices that families make about how to bring up happy and healthy children;

Neighborhood Councils and their Community Schools programs for children are planned by parents according to the interests of their children, not by some administrator sitting in City Hall.

- To promote services and other activities that are comprehensive, oriented to the needs of children and families seen as whole people.

Neighborhood Councils and their Community Schools programs for children and families are creative, varied, and extensive, and nurture the whole person in such areas of interest as music programs, sports activities, drama, dance, art, crafts, journalism, chess, legos, astrology, all created by parents in cooperation with the Director of the program according to the interests of their children.

Citywide Community Council

Brief History of Community School Program Budgets

In the last thirteen years, the Neighborhood Councils have had to defend their budgets from cuts three times, while the budgets of other City programs servicing children and families have increased.

The upcoming budget for FY 2004 will be the fourth time the Neighborhood Councils have had to organize to stop severe cuts to their programs.

The first attack on our budgets in 1991 was a request from the City for Neighborhood Councils to pay the City \$10,000 to cover the increased cost of overhead such as postage and photocopying. In that year, the City had a \$12.4 million revenue surplus.

The FY1992 budget threatened the Neighborhood Council budgets with serious cuts, but over 900 Neighborhood Councils members signed a petition to deny the proposed cuts, thus only "level funding" our budgets.

In the FY2001 budget, the City attempted to cut one full-time position (the Fletcher), but after our huge lobbying effort, the City Manager promised us he would not cut the position. Yet, he has, in effect, cut the position: the position was never filled and the money was taken out of our program budget. Again, well over 900 members of the Neighborhood Councils petitioned the City for increased funds for Directors' salaries and for operating budgets. The Neighborhood Councils were successful in having those wishes granted.

The Neighborhood Councils were founded 36 years ago by the City to provide services to children, families, adults, and seniors in the many City neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Councils created many programs, the most popular of which was their Community Schools. At the inception of Neighborhood Councils, the City funded two positions: a program director and an assistant program director. The councils created the programs, such as Community Schools.

Eventually, the Department of Human Services Programs grew out of the Neighborhood Councils and took over many of the services previously provided by Neighborhood Councils and created other programs which have larger budgets than the Community School programs of the Neighborhood Councils.

Today, Neighborhood Councils are again fighting to save their popular programs.

Communication #1

~~An application was received from Dr. J. R. Fennell, requesting a curb cut at the premises numbered 47 Bishop Allen Drive; said petition has received approval from Inspectional Services, Traffic, Parking and Transportation, Historical Commission and Public Works with conditions. Four neighborhood association letters were sent. No neighborhood response received.~~

In City Council May 5, 2003

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2003 MAY 05 10:23 AM
CITY OF SEATTLE
STREET USE PERMIT

Citywide Community Council

April 28, 2003

City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Subject: Neighborhood Council Budgets

Dear City Councilors:

WHAT? The upcoming City budget as submitted by the City Manager will deal a significant blow to the programs of the Neighborhood Councils of this City, and, in particular, our Community Schools.

Community School enrollments = ~1500 children *

Child-care enrollment = ~295 children *

(* approximate)

In the FY 2004 budget, the City will cut two full-time, benefited positions from our budget. The rough estimate of the savings for these two positions is \$80,000.

The City Manager is closing the Longfellow and the Graham & Parks community school programs run by the Longfellow and Graham and Parks Neighborhood Councils respectively. As you know, the Longfellow School and the Graham & Parks School buildings are closing as part of the City's school reorganization plan.

Are these community school programs being cut because the schools that provide space for them are closing? If that is the reasoning, then why are the child-care classes that are housed in these same buildings not being cut?

In fact, not only is the City Manager not cutting the two after-school classes of the Child Care Program now housed in the Graham & Parks School, but rather, he has found space for one of those classes in the nearby Morse School and is assiduously looking for another venue for the second after-school class in Cambridgeport in order to keep those programs in the neighborhood. Yet, he is not looking for space in the neighborhood to house the Community School program.

Question: Since the City Manager is attempting to relocate one program currently in the Graham & Parks building that serves children (2 after-school classes), why is he not trying to relocate the other program in the Graham & Parks building (the Community School) that also serves children?

WHY?

One must ask, why cut one program for children and not the other?

S-161

Communication # 1

A communication was received
from Carolyn Shipley, regarding
Neighborhood Council Budgets.

In City Council May 5, 2003

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