



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
MASSACHUSETTS 02139 • 617-498-9090

Francis H. Duehay
Mayor

December 10, 1985

Dear Member of the Cambridge Community,

I am enclosing a copy of the report of the Executive Director of Cambridge Discovery, the new non-profit tourist information center in Cambridge.

While the first activity this year was the opening of a Harvard Square booth, this operation envisions opening three more booths in other parts of Cambridge and also feels that a walk-in center is needed.

I would very much welcome your thoughts and reactions to this first report. Please write me or send your suggestions directly to Charlotte Moore, c/o Cambridge Discovery, P.O. Box 1987, Cambridge, MA 02238.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Francis H. Duehay".

Francis H. Duehay

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CAMBRIDGE DISCOVERY, INC.

Submitted by Charlotte B. Moore

December 11, 1985

CAMBRIDGE DISCOVERY INFORMATION CENTER, FIRST OPERATING MONTHS

Cambridge Discovery, Inc. is the nonprofit organization founded in 1985 to create a resident and visitor information center for the City of Cambridge. Its goal is to provide top quality information on city services, attractions, shopping, and educational opportunities and to create programs that will enable residents better to understand their city's roots and to communicate their knowledge to visitors. Cambridge Discovery has been careful to include in its definition of "visitor" any resident of the Greater Boston area, and to include in its store of information anything that enables Cambridge residents fully to utilize their own city.

BOARD MEMBERS:

The Cambridge Discovery Board Members are:

David R. Vickery (Vice President, Hines Industrial), President
Paul E. Dietrich (Principal, Cambridge Seven Associates), Treasurer
Toni G. Wolfman (Partner, Foley Hoag & Eliot), Secretary
Sheldon R. Cohen (President, Harvard Square Business Association)
Robert G. Neiley (Chairman, Cambridge Historical Commission)
Anne Marie Rowan (President, Aigner Associates)

Besides the working board, Cambridge Discovery's organization includes an honorary Cambridge Welcoming Committee. Chairing this committee is the Mayor of Cambridge, Francis H. Duehay. Honorary Co-Chairs are the Presidents of MIT and Harvard, Paul Gray and Derek Bok. Over 40 heads of city organizations have agreed to committee membership.

This summer has seen the accomplishment of Stage I in the organization's plans: Cambridge Discovery disseminated information on all areas of the city and all aspects of the city's life from its booth in the heart of Harvard Square; the volunteers estimate that they answered 18,000 questions from mid-June to mid-October. Cambridge Discovery also instituted a tour service which, during the summer months, employed high school students as tour guides.

BOOTH:

The fully air-conditioned and heated booth was delivered to Harvard Square on the morning of June 16, and opened Tuesday, June 18. The booth is basically a comfortable, though crowded, space in which to work. Two people fit well; a third can stay inside without much discomfort.

STAFF:

The booth has been open 7 days a week, from 9 to 6 every day but Sunday (1 to 5 on Sunday). For two weeks in October, the booth was closed most mornings because of the great difficulty in recruiting volunteers. The volunteer staff take half-day stints, 9 to 1:30 or 1:30 to 6. There are currently 14 volunteers sharing the workload.

TOURS:

Cambridge teenagers ages 15 through 17 were recruited in the Spring for an extensive course on the city, its history, politics, development issues, historic preservation, and cultural life. This course was designed by Lou Carreras (director of the East Cambridge Heritage Center) and myself, and included as guest instructors Councillors Duehay and Graham; Frank Buda, director of tourist services at Longfellow House; and Charles Sullivan, director of the Cambridge Historical Commission. After 8 class sessions with required homework and several practice tours, the 7 guides led tours every day through Labor Day. (We gave one tour a week, on Saturdays, through October and presently offer tours by reservation to groups. These are led by a professional guide who is paid the often inconsequential sum of one-quarter tickets sold.)

Without the benefit of advertising except in the Globe, Chronicle, and Tab, over 600 people took our tour this summer. To give us greater visibility, the Sonesta advertised the 3:00 tour in its daily newsletter to guests and instructed its Summerfest staff to promote the tour as they helped guests plan their stay. People who could prove they were Sonesta guests could take the tour at a small discount.

By July 11 there were some 1000 brochures in the Cambridge hotels, advertising the tours. By August some 5000 brochures were distributed in the hotels.

The income we derived from the tours (\$3 for adults; \$1.50 for children and seniors) by no means covered the cost of training the guides and paying their wages. The Polaroid Foundation's grant provided funds for the course; the company loaned us cameras and gave us film to use in training sessions. TeenWork and the Mayor's Office provided the major portion of the guides' salaries. TeenWork allowed us to employ 3 guides in 2 job slots; the 4 others received support from the Mayor's Office. We supplemented the latter by .35 an hour so their pay matched that of the TeenWork employees. We took the responsibility for the full \$3.35 pay once the Mayor's Office employees exceeded the 100-hour limit.

STAFF RELATIONSHIPS:

The volunteers who came to train before the booth was even open have been incredibly loyal. They are proud to have been at the beginning of such a promising project and they feel that their contribution plays a meaningful role in their lives.

The guides were all articulate and enthusiastic youngsters who likewise were taking a gamble by committing their working hours to an organization that had no track record and could promise only a minimum wage. Five of them held down two jobs to earn what they needed.

Between tours, we paired the teenagers with the senior citizen volunteers in the booth. This arrangement was absolutely critical for handling the enormous volume of questions asked.

Though totally unanticipated, the relationship that evolved between young guides and older volunteers proved to be one of the finest benefits from the Cambridge Discovery program. The response of the youngsters and adults was overwhelmingly positive. Even now, the volunteers ask how the kids are doing and the kids drop by to say hello.

QUESTIONS:

In the summer months the staff were able to record 150 to 250 questions a day. They complained that they were often so busy that they couldn't take the time to note their contacts on the forms provided. At the rate of 200 questions a day, we answered some 18,000 questions by mid-October. Close to one-half the questions asked pertain to directions to buses and subways. We still hand out more bus schedules than any other type of free information.

Other questions had to do with the usual tourist problems like where's the coop, where's the yard, where's a good restaurant, what is the Harvard animal, where are the stores, where are the 2 Indian burial mounds and the civil war barracks.

INFORMATION:

Before the booth opened we collected basic Cambridge information in 3 volumes: Food and Lodging; Shopping and Entertainment; and General Information (including hot lines, city services, free meals and lodging, taxis and car rentals, barbershops, etc., hospitals and ambulances, cemeteries and funeral parlors, day care centers, etc.). These books are periodically checked and updated.

We post a daily event on newsprint, hang flyers and posters for nonprofit organizations' events, keep sports schedules and brochures from various museums and other Cambridge attractions, and hand out endless MBTA bus schedules.

Before they work in the booth, volunteers are briefed about the sorts of information they should be prepared to offer. They are also given sets of materials to study on their own and are encouraged to track events and activities in the Globe, Tab, Chronicle, MIT Tech Talk, the Harvard Gazette. The Travelers' Aid Society in Boston provided an introductory session on their own system and instructed them in how to detect problems and tap into their on-call social workers. We also provide a link with Bridge over Troubled Waters, whose street workers are in Harvard Square from late afternoon to 11:00pm.

I have been adamant that the volunteers learn about all parts of Cambridge and are able to promote the different neighborhoods as best they can. This has been a very difficult task. Most people come to Cambridge wanting to see Harvard and they are not willing to travel outside the confines of Harvard Square.

I have also encouraged the volunteers to promote Cambridge's public art by suggesting that people use the handsome pamphlets provided by the Arts Commission and the Arts on the Line program.

SALES:

Besides tours we sell maps of Boston and walking tours of Old Cambridge; some guidebooks (MIT publications and the Blue Guide); a gorgeous poster of Cambridge during the 1978 snowstorm, and Cambridge Peace Commission T shirts.

The walking tours of Old Cambridge were originally published by the Historical Commission during the Bicentennial. With their permission, Cambridge Discovery has become the publisher of the series; an updated edition of Old Cambridge was printed at no cost by W.R. Grace and Puritan Press. Currently we are updating the East Cambridge tour and will be printing it this winter with a grant from the East Cambridge Savings Bank. We have matched this brochure with a guided tour which we will offer once a week during the summer of 1986. Also scheduled for publication this winter is the tour of Revolutionary Cambridge.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS:

Harvard University. The University was quite concerned that our guides were presenting accurate information about Harvard and that the volunteers were referring prospective students to the correct office. I met with David Rosen, head of the news office, and Marjorie Heffron, head of the information office, to discuss exactly what we were doing. I also took the guides to the Admissions Office for an orientation meeting, so they could answer at least the rudimentary questions about Harvard.

Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. We gave away the Chamber's free map of Cambridge until it went out of print in late November. This is clearly the best map of Cambridge for general directions. In return, the Chamber is putting our brochure in their mailings to people intending to visit Cambridge. (At present we are giving away the Cambridge Community Development Department's map, which is not really the best tool for tourists.)

Greater Boston Convention and Tourist Bureau. On June 13, the Cambridge Tourism Committee (including Cambridge Discovery Board Members David Vickery, Sheldon Cohen, Anne Marie Rowan, Vice Mayor Duehay; the general managers of all the Cambridge hotels; Jackie O'Neill; and Walter Milne) met with Bob Cumings (president) and Gary Grimmer (vice president) of the Bureau to discuss ways to enhance Cambridge's visibility and ways to fund Cambridge Discovery's activities. Cumings suggested that I begin by obtaining in-kind help from the Bureau and was firm that the Bureau could not fund us at any level.

Though I have met with various Bureau managers now, I do not feel that they have given me much in the way of valuable help, except for an honorary membership with a value of \$500. The one thing I have managed to do is to convince them that, if they are to receive state money and act on

behalf of Cambridge, they should at least be promoting this city more vigorously and should have someone to monitor the quality of the material they publish about Cambridge.

Toward that end, I completely rewrote a section of their new guidebook for 1986, which began its section on Cambridge, "Harvard will be 350 years old this year." I also researched Cambridge photographs for their use in promotion packages and other publications. (The State's Office of Tourism has likewise asked for photos to use in promoting the state.)

The Convention Bureau has asked in return that I help them find members in Cambridge. There was discussion of my being the liaison between the business community and their development office. In that role, I would be encouraging businesses to join the Bureau.

STATE:

On several occasions I have been told by staff in the State Tourism Office (including its head, Dick Rust) that Cambridge Discovery is not entitled to state monies for promoting tourism in this city. The only organization that qualifies for funding from the state is the Greater Boston Convention and Tourist Bureau. State funds go either to regional tourism councils (like the Bureau) for distribution at their discretion or to statewide promotion campaigns like last summer's Spirit of Massachusetts campaign.

Mayor Duehay and Edward Bernays have both been in contact with the Governor's office with regard to this problem. In correspondence with the Governor this Spring, Bernays informed him that this organization is exactly the sort that should be encouraged in his efforts to enhance Massachusetts as a tourist destination. Mayor Duehay is in the process of setting up a meeting with a member of the Governor's staff, Rep. Flaherty, and Dick Rust to discuss ways to find state monies to support Cambridge Discovery. Our intention is to have the state and city supply matching funds to cover two-thirds of a \$100,000 budget. The rest of the budget will be supplied through grants, donations, and income from activities.

On November 21, Mayor Duehay testified before the State Special Commission on Tourism. The Commission was investigating the possibility of building additional information centers in the state. Duehay stressed the importance of a center for Cambridge, the second largest tourist attraction in the state, and the fact that, in partnership with the City of Cambridge and Cambridge Discovery, the state had the opportunity to build a creative information program that could serve as a model nationwide.

MBTA:

Cambridge Discovery furnishes more information on the MBTA system than on any other type of organization or institution. We have found that travelers are confused by the directions given underground by MBTA employees or even upset by employees' rude behavior. We are the only source in the area that routinely keeps bus schedules for all the buses leaving the Square and the only organization that will take the time to trace on maps routes for people wanting to travel through all Greater Boston by public transportation.

In October, I visited with Timothy Gens, the Director of Development and Communications for the "T", who told me that there was no possibility for Cambridge Discovery to get any compensation for our efforts. We will be in touch about ways that we can raise funds for joint programs such as close circuit TV monitors in the stations, but I feel that we are performing a major service for the "T" and its customers that ought to be acknowledged.

PROBLEMS:

1. Staffing the booth is an ongoing problem, taking a good share of my time since I have to find sources of volunteers, advertise, interview candidates, train them, and keep them informed of every little change, day by day. My opinion is that this will not be solved until we can hire personnel or a volunteer services coordinator.
2. Assistance with the day-to-day maintenance of the booth is critical. Besides volunteer recruitment and training, making sure that we have the most timely information on Cambridge activities, updating and refining our source material, keeping the books, and responding to telephone queries are all important but time-consuming activities.
3. Space is a true problem. We cannot keep enough inventory in the booth to fulfill our day-to-day needs; nor do people seem inspired to purchase items costing more than a dollar or two at a walk-up window. Just as important, the volunteers find that they need to spread out maps and brochures for visitors and to feel relaxed about spending a fair amount of time helping people really explore the city completely. Long lines of people standing outside in the heat or rain are not conducive to providing the type of quality, caring service we would like to offer.

THE FUTURE:

Cambridge Discovery is already beginning to service visiting professional groups with information packages and specially designed tours, and is developing a comprehensive tour program for the city, focussing on the individual neighborhoods, their populations, history, and visitor attractions.

This Winter I am paying particular attention to finding better ways to promote our tour program through magazines such as Where, Panorama, and airlines publications as well as through regularly scheduled PSAs in the local press. I shall also be writing to the important guidebook publishers to inform them of our existence (guidebooks now tell visitors to get city information from the Harvard Information Office). Finally, I am working with board members to develop a promotional brochure package.

Beyond that, Cambridge Discovery proposes a program for promoting the city combined with fundraising activities that reaches worldwide by drawing on the ethnic populations of the city and the ambassadors of their countries of origin (designed with the help of Edward Bernays, a staunch supporter of Cambridge Discovery), and less ambitious activities designed specifically to draw the attention of the travel and retail press both locally and nationwide.

Cambridge Discovery's long-term agenda includes development of a walk-in information center near Harvard Square housing a slide show of Cambridge by the same company that developed "Where's Boston" as well as a full tourist facility and bookstore/gift shop. We also envision three information booths in addition to the one in Harvard Square -- at the Alewife MBTA Station, Kendall Square, and Lechmere Square.

The board and I feel that the projected annual budget of \$100,000 should be shared equally by the city, the state, and the business community. With the new hotel/motel tax in place, the city will be able to contribute its share; the business community is presently organizing to contribute its third; and efforts are being made to obtain funding from the state.

For further information, please call Charlotte Moore at 491-6278, or write to Cambridge Discovery, P.O. Box 1987, Cambridge, MA 02238. Thank you.

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Communication from Mayor Francis H. Duehay,
transmitting a report of the Executive
Director of Cambridge Discovery, the new non-
profit tourist information center in Cambridge.

In City Council,

December 30, 1985

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