

middle-school children. Ms. Walser suggested that information could be organized by age and interest level.

Ms. Herold pointed out that the city has been working on a database of resources for school children and emphasized the need for information on resources for providers and parents. She noted that, since not everyone will be able to use computers to access the information, there will have to be other links. Focussing on the database, she stated that it would be helpful to know what to expect from that project.

Ms. Simmons then asked each member of the group to state the points of interest they wanted to look at over the summer.

Ms. Bibbons thought it was important to work on the data in order to identify the available resources by the fall. She noted, for example, that fine arts programming was the weakest link in the schools, with almost no resources, an issue that this process could address. In response, Ms. Walser stated that the School Department is hiring a full-time arts coordinator to address this need.

Ms. Herold then opened the issue of the scope of out-of-school time ("OST"). She asked for clarification on whether child care was included, and what other services would be addressed.

Ms. Simmons suggested that the child care question was part of a larger issue that needed to be clarified: what services and programs should be included and addressed in the study? Related points were: what did parents want as services, and the need for a glossary in the report to define what was being addressed.

Councillor Davis agreed with the need for a glossary. "Child care" is used to mean two very different things--all-day care for pre-school children, and the enrolled full-week afterschool programs for school-age kids.

Ms. Keegan suggested that it is important to identify within each school site, including independent elementary schools, all the programs available, including non-profit ones, both during and after school. It is also important to capture the data on who is being served, and to study the demographics of each site. She pointed out that organizations have different missions and serve different populations and asked whether there should be a common vision. In order to make recommendations to the City Council, Ms. Keegan recommended that the group identify what children have as resources and identify who is being served. Possible sources of information include surveys by organizations, and serious solicitation of feedback from parents.

Ms. Shoy emphasized the gap in services during the period between school and camp and the need to address it. Over the years, she has noted the growing need for services during this time. She also pointed out the specific need for services at the end of August before school starts. She asked whether program schedules should be revised to

cover this time, and whether school space could be made available. She suggested that the group look at non-profit resources.

Ms. Simmons noted some complications with the use of school space, such as the need for staff to prepare for the school year; at the same time, she pointed out that the schools belong to the public.

Councillor Davis stated that organizations such as teen centers have a role to play in OST, and that there was a need to identify the big picture of what was available and the remaining gaps in service. She asked if the committee needed a consultant or had the ability in house to do a survey and create recommendations in six months.

Ms. Richards Scott pointed out that some institutions such as hospitals manage to maintain operations fulltime while providing service and that the city could also offer services at schools throughout the year, provided there was the funding, effort and commitment. The question is whether there is a need to operate at this level and whether the need is great enough to justify the increased costs. Referring to the city's Action Plan, she stated that it covered many elements of the OST initiative in terms of connecting school and after-school services. She also referred to the Boston model for integrating these two programs, and spoke of the need to build systems that bridge the two. According to Ms. Richards Scott, there has been a lot of work on the issue of OST resources, and there is an upcoming conference. Regarding the specific issue of whether child care is included, she suggested that the lines are blurry. She believes that all families deserve full-enrichment opportunities, and that the challenge is to provide all kids with access to high-quality programming. Her goals are to provide professional development in programs, to create high-quality programs and to have the programs coordinate.

Ms. Eirich pointed out that state grants for school programs target students who need improvement or fail in the MCAS, and can leave other children unserved. She has drafted a survey to identify and assess school programs, including academic, recreational and day care services, and will be visiting every school. Melody Brazzo has also created a partial list of after-school programs, focusing on academic achievement.

Ms. Herold mentioned another survey of all school programs done by Mary Mroz one and a half years ago. She raised the unique aspect of the current City Council/School Committee involvement in this committee and asked what could be enhanced by this group's work that other groups could not do. She suggested that the Action Plan, which tried to include everybody's voices, was a blueprint that this group could use to create recommendations and goals that require school committee and city coordination to achieve; priorities also needed to be set in the Action Plan. The major focus should be to improve the quality of services and aid teachers. She asked what resources are available to review the Action Plan.

Councillor Simmons stated that it is important to hear what program staff sees as the issues.

Ms. Neel pointed out that there was a lot of available information and summarized the main issues and questions as: the importance of a glossary to understand the analysis, the need to build on what we do well now, what we want to offer children in Cambridge, and whether there is a plan with priorities. She offered to have service providers make presentations to educate people about the current resources.

Ms. DeRosa stated that pre-school groups were out ahead on issues of resources because of their work with community partnerships, and commended Ms. Richards Scott for her work with community groups. She noted the need for programs to get ESL parents involved and raised two specific program issues: income eligibility and transportation. State contracts limit some services to such low income levels that people who need the service aren't eligible. Transportation to off-site care or services can be difficult or impossible because of safety or money issues; can the city make transportation more available?

Ms. Wong raised a concern about duplication of efforts, especially in surveys. She recommended getting copies of all surveys, and merging the information into a master list available to the public, with a glossary. While this would be a huge task, it would provide valuable information for families about all the services available to children. With a focus on OST and after-school resources, this group should flesh out and coordinate inventories as the basis for meeting the Action Plan goals. She believed this group had the knowledge and ability to identify resources and define the terms. One question for the group is how to create a level playing field for parents throughout the city, given the variation in services to different schools.

Councillor Davis summarized the major issues as: what is available for OST services? what are the gaps in services? how can we enhance the services?

Mr. Chambers spoke about the need to be deliberate about promoting programs, by streamlining information to make it useful to the public, and about collaborating, by creating a good fit between schools and outside programs. He agreed that transportation is an important issue, and noted that some programs are very resourceful about using available transportation.

Ms. Simmons stated that one next step would be for her, Ms. Walser and Ms. Drury to review the recommendations, tasks and inventories available.

Councillor Davis agreed that this committee, with School Committee and City Council involvement, is in a unique position to make recommendations for consideration of OST to both governmental bodies. They could also align multiple departments and set policy for the departments to work together. She recommended an official School Committee/City Council committee on OST, and a review of the Action Plan in order to use it in this process. She suggested a presentation on the plan as a next step in this initiative.

Ms. Keegan viewed the transportation question as part of a broad issue that the community schools have raised for years: if programs take place after school hours and transportation home is unavailable, kids cannot take advantage of school programs.

Ms. Neel indicated that the School Department has an unwritten policy on late busses, which is that if there is a bus route and space, kids will be transported. Even so, there are still kids dropped off and met by DHS staff three or four blocks from the program site.

Ms. Herold spoke about the complications with late busses, especially the high cost. She suggested that schools need to explore other options, and that one focus might be the scheduling of busses. She pointed out that city bids can require additional services in terms of hours and services. Ms. Herold also agreed that it was important to consider what this committee can do that other groups cannot.

Ms. Neel noted the need to consider the effect of changing from parent pick-up to bus transportation on the contact that parents and program staff have. That contact is essential to maintaining quality programs.

Ms. DeRosa brought up the importance of considering parents' needs when considering transportation. What would be a good time for parents and staff to meet, given work constraints?

Ms. Keegan stated that it was important to coordinate transportation and contacts between parents and after-school staff.

Ms. Shoy agreed, stating that in pre-school particularly, there was a need to create connections between staff and parents at sites with transportation. It would be useful to look at the costs of different methods of providing transport, such as buying vs. leasing.

Ms. Wong informed the group that Joe Barr, Community Development Law Department, has done assessments of transport, with the focus on need rather than costs or options. The Kids' Council has also studied the issue, and has a copy of Mr. Barr's report.

Ms. Simmons closed the meeting by reviewing the next steps: acquiring and summarizing all available reports on OST, after-school programs, and transportation, including the Action Plan. The representatives of community organizations will provide a description of their programs and resources to the committee. The City Clerk will acquire all the reports done by the city; in addition, any reports that the organizations have created on OST programs and transportation should be provided to the City Clerk. After the reports are compiled, Councillor Simmons will consult with Ms. Drury and Ms. Davis and assign reports to committee members for them to summarize to the group. Ms. Richards Scott and Ms. Neel offered to make a presentation on the Action Plan. Councillor Simmons stated that she would defer decisions on how to use the Action Plan in this process until after she reviewed it.

Ms. Herold suggested focusing on the Action Plan first in order to determine the next steps for committee members over the summer.

Ms. Neel recommended coordinating the surveys with the ongoing work on the database, in order to create a master inventory of programs and providers.

Ms. Keegan pointed out that there are also ongoing surveys of users which could be integrated into the project.

Ms. Wong identified the steps to acquire the necessary information, including an inventory of resources and a needs assessment. She noted that it was important to understand how information was categorized in the surveys. The group then needs to decide which topics to address and to decide what is doable short-term, given the 1-year framework for the project.

Ms. Simmons scheduled the next meeting of the committee for Tuesday, June 4, 2002, at 11:00 A.M. in the Ackermann Room. The committee will not meet otherwise during the summer. Councillor Simmons thanked all those present for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 A.M.

For the Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Denise Simmons", written in a cursive style.

Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair

City of Cambridge

HUMAN SERVICES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair

Councillor Marjorie C. Decker

Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio

In City Council June 10, 2002

The Human Services Committee held a public hearing on May 7, 2002, beginning at 9:10 A.M. in the Ackermann Room for the purpose of discussing the work of the committee for this term.

Present at the hearing were Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Henrietta Davis, School Committee Member Nancy Walser, City Clerk D. Margaret Drury and Elaine McGrath, Clerk's Office. Also present were Judy Bibbins, Department of Human Services (DHS)-Community Schools, Jackie Neel, DHS, Roslyn Shoy, Program Director, Community Schools, Mary Eirich, Cambridge Public Schools, Susan Richards Scott, Agenda for Children, Elaine DeRosa, CEOC Director, Mary Wong, Director of the Kids' Council, Selvin Chambers, Director of Youth Program, Eileen Keegan, Division Head of the Community Schools Division, and Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, DHS.

Councillor Simmons convened the hearing and explained the purpose. She began the discussion with a summary of the meeting on April 4, 2002, which focused on afterschool programs. She recapped her efforts with Ms. Walser to integrate the work of the City Council and School Committee to identify, coordinate and fill the gaps in the afterschool and summer programs for Cambridge children. She estimated that it would take a year to craft recommendations to the School Committee and City Council for policies that would improve these programs. She pointed out the importance of having subcommittee members who would remain involved in the issue, in addition to any short-term task forces on specific issues. Councillor Simmons emphasized the need for summer programs for children, given the gaps in school programming at the beginning and end of the summer. She noted that it is not only the city's responsibility to provide after-school care, and that the group needs to look at other resources. As part of this process, the group needs to identify what is being offered, to identify gaps in services, and to inform citizens about what is available. Among specific issues are the needs of middle-school students and the availability of city resources.

Ms. Walser asked the participants to focus on what goals they wanted to achieve in this project in the next year, and to work backwards from those to identify the tasks for this summer. Her expectation was that, after a year's work of reviewing needs, resources and possible programs, the subcommittee could articulate a vision for how to work together to provide quality after-school and summer programs. This would include what the School Committee, non-profits and school staffs could provide to children. Children and parents have asked for more activities to develop kids' interests, especially for

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Committee Report #1

Committee Report from Councillor
E. Denise Simmons, Chair of the
Human Services Committee, for a
meeting held on May 7, 2002 for
the purpose of discussing the work
of the committee.

In City Council June 10, 2002

**REPORT ACCEPTED.
PLACED ON FILE.**