



City of Cambridge
Department of Human Service Programs

51 Inman Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, 498-9076 7 PM 4:19

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager
FROM: Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager
DATE: May 16, 1989
SUBJECT: Council Order on Surplus Food Distribution

My staff has communicated with staff at Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc. (CEOC) about the City Council's concern regarding efficient distribution of surplus foods to various sites in Cambridge. Gerald Bergman, CEOC Coordinator of the Cambridge Food Pantry Network, has spoken with and written to Mayor Vellucci after the April 3rd Council Order, and has sent a letter to the Mayor and City Council. Copies of the two letters are enclosed.

In the letters, Mr. Bergman details the methods used for food allocations to the various sites and procedures to make certain no one in need goes without food. We feel confident that CEOC is addressing the Mayor's and the City Councillors' concerns now and for the future.

Enc.

DIVISIONS:

Childcare
498-9076

Community Learning Center
547-1589

Community & Youth
498-9037/9072

Council on Aging/Elderly Services
498-9039

Low Income Fuel Assistance
498-9038

Planning & Development
498-9076

Recreation
498-9028

CAMBRIDGE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE, INC.

April 4, 1989

Mayor Al vellucci
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA. 02139

Dear Mayor Vellucci,

I appreciated the opportunity to speak with you today about the ongoing needs of the hungry in Cambridge. The rapid rise in hunger among children and the working poor as well as the continued crisis of hunger among elders is a great cause for concern.

I will attempt to follow up on your suggestion regarding an increased use of school and hospital refrigeration and cooking facilities. I am confident that with your support, these facilities can be used to the maximum to feed the hungry.

In regard to some specifics about the current USDA commodities distribution, I offer the following:

a) cheese has not been available for a year in Cambridge. There is no program in the state that distributes cheese, and this has been the case for quite some time. If cheese becomes available again, you can be assured that CEOC will make every effort to gain the largest possible allotment for Cambridge.

2) The Eastern part of Cambridge now receives just over 35% of all USDA commodities that are distributed. For the purposes of this discussion, I am including distribution sites at Millers River Apartments, Putnam School Apartments, Kennedy School, St. Anthony's, Roosevelt Towers and COPA. I am attaching the distribution schedule for all sites in Cambridge in order to indicate when and where food is distributed. Of the 42,672 lbs. of food that were distributed during the week of 3/27/89 - 3/31/89, some 14,994 lbs. were distributed through the above named sites.

3) CEOC has and will continue to:

- a) seek the maximum number of commodities available
- b) seek the maximum number of pounds of those commodities available
- c) maintain the greatest number of sites for distribution of any city in the Commonwealth for the purposes of maximizing the impact of the program

4) After a reasonable period of time, undistributed food is collected and brought to pantries and feeding programs, and used in the appropriate manner. If you know of anyone who has the whereabouts of large surpluses of undistributed commodities, please ask them to contact me with the specifics as to location, amount and type of commodity. It is everyone's responsibility to make certain that this program works effectively for everyone.

5) In regards to shortages at any given site during a distribution, it is regrettable, but sometimes unavoidable. For example, the Kennedy School did not have enough of the commodities to meet the demand. The Kennedy School received only enough food (peanut butter, butter and dry milk for sixty persons. This determination was made by me after consultation with the volunteers at the Kennedy School. Some of the criteria going into this decision about amounts left at the School for distribution were: previous distribution amounts (only 45 persons came for the last distribution); weather (a driving rain during the scheduled day); ability to store safely undistributed food (lack of adequate refrigeration and safe storage) and the estimates of the volunteer coordinators (60 persons coming during the one hour distribution period was considered a good estimate by the volunteer).

It is important to note that other East Cambridge locations were available to Cambridge residents the same afternoon as the Kennedy School and the next morning and afternoon. These schedules were widely distributed, and were available at the Kennedy School.

The most difficult task of distribution is to determine reasonably well the turnout at any given site. This was not done well at the Kennedy School this past week, but hindsight is obviously easier than estimations at the given time.

Upon learning that food had run out at the Kennedy School, I did offer to bring more food the following morning, but it was concluded that it would be just as well to refer people to other operating East Cambridge sites. People calling me at CEOC were referred to other sites, pantries that had food or were given the opportunity to pick up food at CEOC. No person who called CEOC was denied food!

6) In regard to future distributions at the Kennedy School. I have suggested that we use a modified OPEN site plan. People could sign up in advance of the distribution (in person or by phone). Enough food would be brought to the Kennedy School to meet that signup need, and in addition, additional food could be left for those walking in off the street who meet the income and residence criteria. This or some similar system will undoubtedly be adopted.

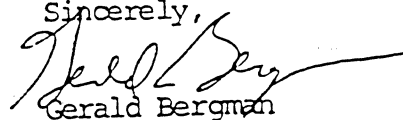
7) The next distribution will be the week of May 15 - 19. The commodities will include butter, flour and cornmeal and perhaps canned beans and dehydrated eggs. I look forward to having your help in letting all citizens of Cambridge know about the upcoming distribution.

Finally, I appreciate the concern you have shown for the hungry of Cambridge. I also welcome the involvement of the entire city council as we struggle to meet the growing needs of the hungry. We must not only feed those who are in need, but we must overcome the causes of hunger as well.

On behalf of CEOC and the Cambridge Food Pantry Network, I look forward to working with you to make the current reality of hunger and the causes of hunger known to the citizens of Cambridge, and I look forward to the day when the crisis of hunger is no longer a daily fact for hundreds of Cambridge residents.

cc. Cambridge City Council

Sincerely,



Gerald Bergman

CEOC Emergency Food Distribution
Coordinator, Cambridge Food Pantry Network



CAMBRIDGE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE, INC.

May 1, 1989

Mayor Al Vellucci
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA. 02139

Members of the Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA. 02139

Dear Mayor Vellucci and Members of the Cambridge City Council,

I am taking this opportunity to provide you with the upcoming schedule of food distribution for Cambridge.

From May 15 - May 19, over 75,000 pounds of flour, cornmeal, canned beans, egg mix and butter will be distributed. There will be distributions at closed and open sites. Open sites are advertised community-wide, while closed sites are advertised by the volunteers at the particular site.

Any problems with shortages during the March distribution have been discussed and hopefully our estimate of participation will be better. Any "surpluses" from an individual site will be moved to another site or moved to the appropriate pantry or feeding program. In effect, there are no surpluses, because all USDA food is distributed to eligible Cambridge residents. In fact, due to the tremendous hunger epidemic and the decrease in the value and amount of USDA surpluses, there is always a "shortage" of available food.

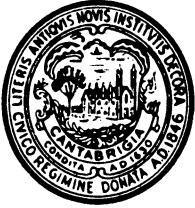
CEOC will continue to ask for and accept ALL available USDA surplus commodity and USDA purchased commodity food.

I have noted that the April 3 order in regard to USDA distributions has not been acted upon. Having taken the initiative to meet with Mayor Vellucci on April 4 and having written a letter to Mayor Vellucci and the Council on April 4, I had hoped that all questions would have been answered.

I look forward to meeting and/or talking with you regarding this problem of hunger in Cambridge.

Sincerely,

Gerald Bergman
Emergency Food Coordinator



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

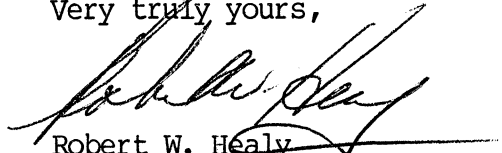
Deputy City Manager

May 22, 1989

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report No. 33 regarding why some food distribution centers are over-stocked while others are in need of supplies, I submit the attached report from the Department of Human Service Programs which outlines the efforts by the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee to meet the needs of the hungry in Cambridge.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

Agenda Item No. 2 *S-386*

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item 33 on
food distribution centers.

In City Council,

May 22, 1989

5-22-89

Placed on File.