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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

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May 12, 2003

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 03-51, regarding a report on the plan for after school programming in light of the upcoming school consolidation, Assistant City Manager for Human Services Jill Herold reports the following:

As a result of the elementary school consolidation and closure plan that was adopted by the School Committee on April 8, 2003, several programs of the Department of Human Service Programs are affected including the Community Schools, Child Care and Family Support programs.

Community Schools: Since the mid-1960's the City has operated a Community School program in every school. Over time there have been changes in the number of programs offered based on the number of buildings operating as schools. When the Lincoln School was closed and converted to housing in the early 1980's the Community School Program closed.

With the closure of the Graham and Parks and Longfellow buildings the Community School programs will be closed. The summer camp programs already planned by these schools will be operated out of the Cambridgeport School for this summer. In the fall, Community School programs will be offered in each elementary school building. The directors of the Graham and Parks and Longfellow Community Schools will be re-assigned to the two Community School programs from which the previous directors took the early retirement incentive in December, 2002 (Fitzgerald and King). The program funds from the two closed schools are being redistributed to the remaining 10 schools. Given that the number of children that participate in classes in each Community School program ranges from 80 to 180 per term it is anticipated that children from the two closed schools who had participated in their Community School program will be able to be served in the school to which they move **or be able to attend other Community Schools in the areas near where they live. We have been meeting with the Community School Neighborhood Councils in the schools affected by the closures to hear their concerns and share our planning.**

Child Care: In the Graham and Parks School the Department currently operates two School Age Child Care (SACC) classrooms (K-2 & 3-5) of 24 children each. In the Longfellow School the Department provides a pre-school for 16 children ages 2 years 9 months – five years. **Unlike the Community Schools where each elementary school building has a Community School Program, the Department runs after school child care in only five schools and pre school in five schools. The closing of the two schools impacts the delivery of child care services as do the consolidations.** Following the vote of the School Committee to close the two schools and consolidate others, Department program staff have begun meeting with families of children in programs that are affected by the change including: Graham and Parks, Longfellow, King & King Open, Harrington, Kennedy and Fitzgerald. The purpose of the meetings is to hear from parents their priorities and their concerns. We have concurrently been meeting with principals to explore their interests and their ability to identify available space in their buildings in which to offer after school (and a pre-school) programs.

The demographics in the after school (SACC) classrooms vary from 100% of the children coming from the school in which the SACC is located to 30-50% of the children coming from schools other than the one in which the SACC is located. These children typically arrive at the SACC by school bus. All children are picked up by their parent/guardian at the end of the day.

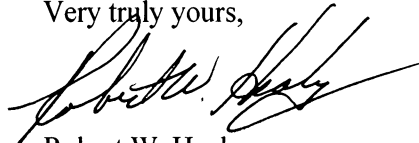
In the current Peabody building there is a 39 child after school child care program that is run by a non-profit board of parents/guardians, many of whose children attend the current Peabody School and many that live in the immediate neighborhood but attend school elsewhere. Efforts are being made to not decrease the licensed child care capacity as a result of the closures and consolidations if at all possible, including those slots offered by the Peabody parent-run program.

Also, the principal of the King Open, that is re-locating to the current Harrington building has expressed a strong interest in continuing to work on the extended day model that is ending its third year in that building. The evaluation and follow up implementation work of Professor Gil Noam of the Harvard Education School continues to bring new resources to the program and the new principal is eager to work together to incorporate the King Open School families into the Harrington program.

In addition to the variables of families' preferences for location, the availability of suitable, licensable space, existing wait lists, principal's priorities, etc. the fact that some families will not know where their children will be attending school until the end of May and for kindergarten families, early June contributes to the challenge of re-locating the **after school** programs. We are working aggressively to finalize our offerings for this fall, working with the many interested parties, with the hope that we will not have to significantly reduce the current capacity. It will be several more weeks before a final determination on location can be made.

Councillor Denise Simmons, as chair of the Human Services Committee of the City Council is continuing to convene the Committee to bring focus on this topic. The Kids' Council has also expressed concern and interest and will be addressing this topic collaboratively with the Human Services Committee.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

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Consent Agenda #9

Awaiting Report Item Number 03-51, regarding a report on the plan for after school programming in light of the upcoming school consolidation.

In City Council May 12, 2003

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