

Cambridge City Council – October 22, 2012

Regarding

Transmitting communication from Robert W. Healy, City Manager, relative to the appropriation of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) grant in the amount of \$1,155.00 to the Grant Fund Human Service Programs Salary and Wages account which will allow the Community Learning Center to plan and implement two focus groups with members of immigrant populations/ethnic minorities in Cambridge to provide input on school meals.

Of course, I support the appropriation. Noting that Cambridge Food Day is this Wednesday, October 24 and remembering that Senator George McGovern died this past weekend, I wanted to make a couple of comments about the ongoing campaign to make affordable, nutritious food accessible to all.

McGovern headed the Kennedy administration's Food for Peace Program and he was a leader in expanding the federal government's food stamp program. There are now 47 million people receiving food stamps. President Clinton awarded McGovern the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 2000, in recognition of his work against hunger. In 2000, Senator McGovern authored the book: "The Third Freedom, Ending Hunger in Our Time"

I want to go back to 1991 when 17,384 Cambridge voters voted to endorse the Cambridge Food Policy referendum and its six action points. This question received more yes votes than there are votes cast in most municipal elections today.

The question read: Shall the City of Cambridge, in response to the growing hunger crisis which affects primarily elders and one in five children, develop and implement a Cambridge Food Policy which would recognize the right of every resident to accessible, safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food, without barriers and without stigma, and shall such a policy include six goals:

I want to read two of those goals:

- 1) Examination of overall city development and city policy for its impact on the availability of food to neighborhood and individuals through non-emergency food sources, and recognition that people's access to safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food must be a priority in overall city development and policy;
- 2) Recruitment of a fully representative citywide committee of residents and providers with maximum possible representation by those in need, which would develop further

goals and strategies regarding the Cambridge Food Policy and hold hearings every six months so that Cambridge residents can assess the progress being made by city councilors, school committee members, city employees and city agencies on the development and implementation of the Cambridge Food Policy.

It is indeed wonderful that Cambridge is getting a grant so that we can ask immigrant and ethnic minorities in Cambridge to provide input on school meals, it is not wonderful that we needed an outside grant to do it.

The City Council in 1991 refused to implement the Cambridge Food Policy and no City Council has implemented its recommendations to this day. We have many dedicated employees and volunteers that care about the hunger crisis, but we have no regular assessment of where we are on the issues, little representation by those in need at any level of policy making, and often no more than uncoordinated efforts to meet the institutional hunger problem. Cities around the country, with far less resources than Cambridge, are doing much more than we are in addressing the hunger issue.

I suggest that Cambridge Food Day, 2012, address these issues and implement the Cambridge Food Policy, even if it is 21 years after its passage.



Gerald Bergman
82 Elm Street

CAMBRIDGE FOOD POLICY REFERENDUM

PASSED ON NOVEMBER 5, 1991 - 17,384 voters in favor (80%)

Shall the City of Cambridge, in response to the growing hunger crisis which affects primarily elders and one in five children, develop and implement a Cambridge Food Policy which would recognize the right of every resident to accessible, safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food, without barriers and without stigma, and shall such a policy include as some of its goals:

- 1) at least 50% participation of all eligible children in the Summer Food Service Program for Children during the summer of 1992, and 100% return of eligibility applications during this 1991-1992 school year in the subsidized School Breakfast and Lunch program;
- 2) 100% accessibility to all Federally financed food programs, through development of an aggressive outreach campaign reading the Federal Food Stamp Program, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and nutrition programs for elders, emphasizing the need for translated materials, multilingual human service workers and the elimination of the stigma of participation;
- 3) integration of nutrition education into elementary and secondary school curricula and ongoing monitoring and staffing of school food programs;
- 4) financial assistance for food purchases so that emergency food pantries, meal programs and shelters can provide adequate and nutrition food during the period in which other goals of the Cambridge Food Policy are being developed and implemented;
- 5) examination of overall city development and city policy for its impact on the availability of food to neighborhoods and individuals through non-emergency food sources, and recognition that people's access to safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food must be a priority in overall city development and policy;
- 6) recruitment of a fully representative citywide committee of residents and providers with maximum possible representation by those in need, which would develop further goals and strategies regarding the Cambridge Food Policy and hold hearings every six months so that Cambridge residents can assess the progress being made by city councilors, school committee members, city employees and city agencies on the development and implementation of the Cambridge Food Policy.

BALLOT QUESTION ARGUMENT

...The goals of the Cambridge Food Policy acknowledges that access to acceptable and affordable food without barriers and without stigma is a basic human right and part of a dignified human existence. The Cambridge Food Policy will direct the city to make federal food programs more accessible. Hundreds of thousands of federal dollars go unspent because people are not signed up for programs which provide summer food for children, school breakfasts and lunches and Food Stamps.

The Cambridge Food Policy goes beyond the work of meals programs and food pantries which serve more than 5000 Cambridge residents each month, by addressing not only the symptoms but the causes for hunger and malnutrition. Access to safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food is a right, regardless of economic or social class. The Cambridge Food Policy will provide the framework within which the city, its residents, and all groups in the city can take action.

For more information, contact:

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